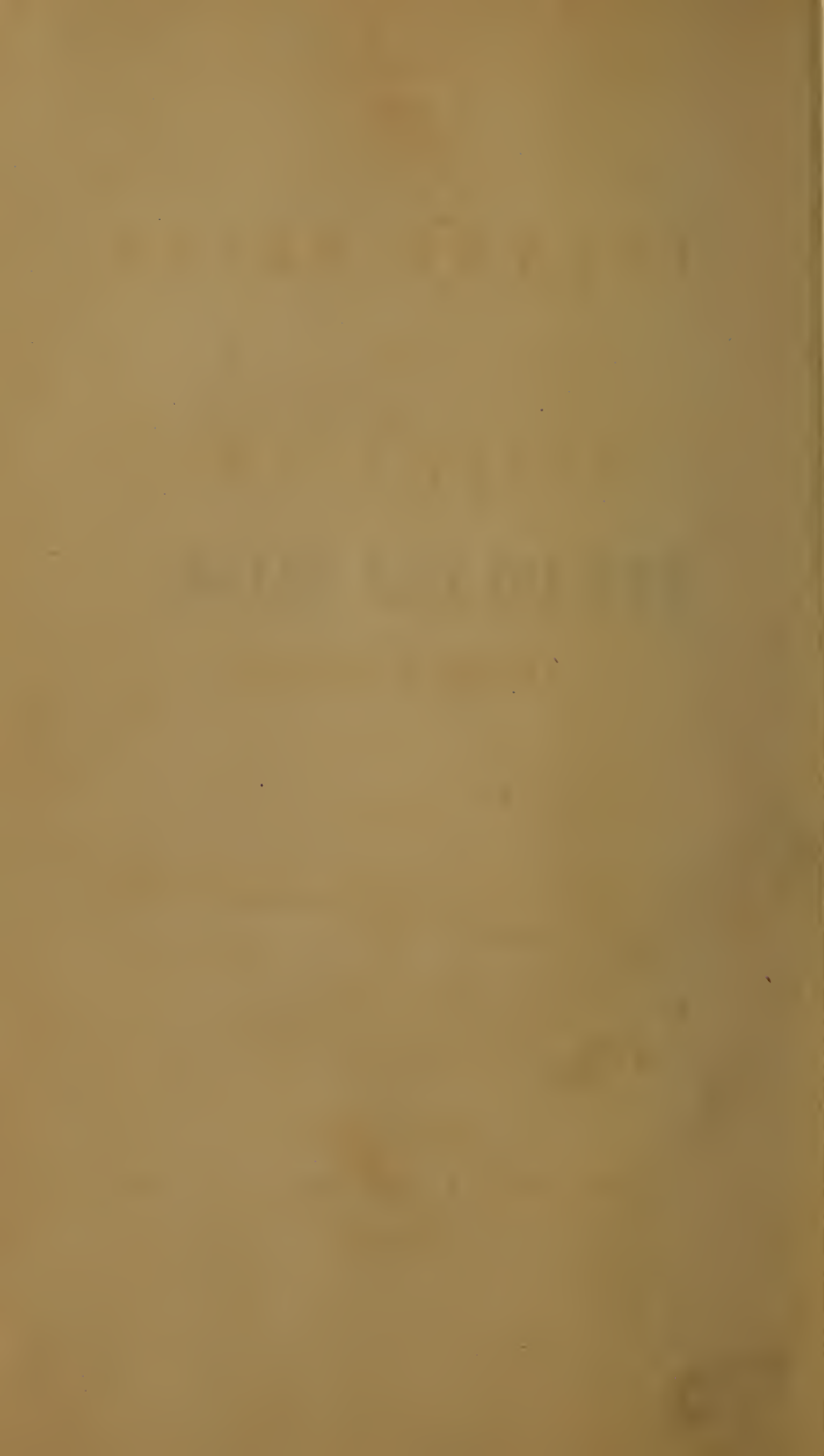


THE ISLAND BRIDE.



THE
ISLAND BRIDE,
AND
OTHER POEMS.

BY
JAMES F. COLMAN.

ROSALIND. O most gentle Jupiter!—What tedious homily
of love have you wearied your parishioners withal, and never
cried, *Have patience, good people!*

AS YOU LIKE IT.

BOSTON:
WILLIAM D. TICKNOR & CO.

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TO

MISS SEDGWICK,

AS A SLIGHT BUT MOST SINCERE TOKEN OF RESPECT

FOR VIRTUES ELOQUENTLY TAUGHT AND GRACEFULLY EXEMPLIFIED,

AND AS AN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF

PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP,

THESE PAGES ARE INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE prefixed title must be permitted, by the courtesy of the reader, to stand for the disjointed episodes and fragments which compose the first of the following poems. The difficulty of combining such desultory sketches under a more definite name will be readily perceived ; and it is urged upon any one who may take up this production with the purpose of looking it through, that he do so not as entering an edifice architecturally arranged, or as commencing a journey leading to some object to which preliminaries are subsidiary, but as for a ramble, where objects familiar and even commonplace may receive an extrinsic interest from his own memories and imaginations.

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CANTO FIRST.



THE ISLAND BRIDE.

CANTO FIRST.

I.

O, SURELY never superstition took,
Fair Greece, more gentle lineaments than thine !
In every sculptured god's calm, earnest look
Trace we a spirit only not divine ;
Thy sweet, congenial credence did entwine
Round each cold image, loveless and alone,
Its tendrils, — as the fragrant, clinging vine
With purple petals paints the pallid stone,
And to the lifeless form lends beauty not its own.

II.

It lulled the yearnings of the human soul —
Which ever would itself assimilate
To the far orbs that o'er earth's changes roll,
Unquenched by the vicissitudes of fate —
On its half-human breast ; and, with full freight
Of odorous flower-buds, threw its arms around
The restless heart, which ever craves to mate
Itself with immortality, and, bound
To earth by earthly ties, still struggles from the ground.

III.

When, in some summer eve's delicious hour,
With memory's music echoing on the ear,
Twilight's soft radiance gilding hill and tower,
The dreaming waters gently murmuring near,
The lily blushing in her virgin fear
With the sun's good-night kiss, and the young rose
Diffusing through the o'erfraught atmosphere
Her happy sighings, — while her bosom glows
Through flakes of snowy light, which full-orbed Dian throws :

IV.

Then, as our solitary footsteps pace
The headland where some blushing river-bride
Melts into ocean's rapturous embrace,
While white-robed clouds in tearful beauty glide,
Like bridemaids to the altar, side by side,
To the rapt soul come fair imaginings,
Features by mortal vision unespied ;
Fancy and Memory each her tribute brings,
And in the furnace-heart her hoarded treasure flings.

V.

Thought, Feeling, Passion, mixed with dross of earth,
Mingled and fused within that burning mould,
Give to some half-immortal image birth,
Lovelier than any kindred earth doth hold ;
And as its rainbow-colored wings unfold,
Despairing man its heavenward flight doth stay,
And grasp its skirts with mortal fingers cold, —
Trusting in that embrace to flee away,
But only strong enough to bind it down to clay.

VI.

And when those transitory glories fade, —
When the storm's cloudy pinions are outspread,
Blotting each guiding planet's friendly aid,
And our bark founders, or the path we tread
Teemeth with ghastly forms and phantoms dread,
Or the racked spirit writhes beneath the rod
In its own offspring's hand, — man bows his head,
Craving to know what paths must yet be trod,
And groping with blind hands to grasp some present God.

VII.

'T is ever thus, — the while our shallop glides
Unchecked upon the tranquil stream of life ;
While each fair morning paints upon the tides
The hues of yesternight, with rapture rife, —
We ask not of the future. But when strife
Vexes the angry billows ; when the mind,
In its own meshes tangled, seeks a knife
To cut the stubborn knots, — alas ! to find
Itself unaided, baffled, impotent, and blind ;

VIII.

When a roused nation's battle-cry is heard,
And war's ensanguined banners are unfurled ;
Whene'er the spirit's trembling depths are stirred ;
When the plague counts his victims ; when the world
Seeth old creeds from their high footing hurled ;
When on one step, one life, there doth depend
The fate of millions ; when above us curled
Hang hissing horrors ; or some knightly friend
Fighteth the giant wrong beneath whose yoke we bend :

IX.

Then, in the suppliant's white-robed guise, would come
The patriot, warrior, statesman, lover, friend,
To question of futurity. But dumb
Are Egypt's idol-shrines ; Rome's temples blend
With mouldering dust ; and tongueless statues lend
No more to Greece the trustfulness or fear
With which old superstition did attend
Its votary's step throughout his wild career,
Foreshowing glory, shame, love, wealth, a throne, a bier.

X.

For ever dumb ? Shall no prophetic voice
Reanimate those oracles of yore,
Where the Ægean's rippling waves rejoice
And melt in music on the Delphic shore ?
Shall old Dodona's oaks their mystic store
Of leafy tongues, unread and silent, cast ?
Shall Ammon's marble accents speak no more,
Choked by the desert's foul, un pitying blast, —
Crumbling, unspared by Time, the great iconoclast ?

XI.

Not so ! The wizard intellect hath power
To call earth's buried empires from the shroud,
And bid their awful phantoms tell each hour
Of youth, rise, grandeur, weakness, till they bowed
Their crownless heads to dust. Among the crowd
Who to the realm of Death sweep ceaselessly,
Each questioned spirit answereth us aloud : —
“Interrogate the Past, and it shall be
To nations, subjects, kings, the Seer of Destiny.”

XII.

Each being mirrors each ; there 's not a face
Wrought on the tattered tapestries of Time,
But beareth some admonitory trace,
To teach our kindred progress, — whether crime
Or virtue lead the motley pantomime
Of our existence ; in the echoing halls
Of History, the hero's shade sublime
Unto his giant-hearted follower calls,
And ghastly guilt warns from the gulf wherein he falls.

XIII.

There may be those content with folded hands
To see life's hurrying pageantry pass by ;
But some would fain arrest those fleeting sands
In the hourglass of eternity, and cry, —
Beneath the mask of thy mortality,
What art thou ? Moves this bit of painted earth
With an intrinsic being ? Doth that eye,
Which challenges the stars in its proud birth,
Read amid earth's decay the quenchless spirit's worth ?

XIV.

And from the countless voices of the Past,
Which, when earth's garmenture was cast aside,
Told of earth's naked nothingness, — the last
Sigh of the martyr then beatified,
The howlings of Remorse, the curse of Pride
Upon Ambition's toys, — responses come,
Which shall as lasting oracles abide,
Of what we have been, are, and shall become,
Bidding the righteous hope, nor unto wrong succumb.

XV.

'T is to the Past, the melancholy Past,
Turns the far-reaching sympathetic soul ;
Its phantom-whisperings, like an organ-blast,
Can our unchastened impulses control.
Not from our birth-time start we for the goal
Of dim eternity ; — the chainless mind
Claims as its own each footprint of the whole
Innumerable band of human-kind,
That down Time's steep and cloud-encircled mountain wind.

XVI.

One being's span can never satisfy
The craving and creative intellect,
Which clasps the universe in sympathy,
Whose vibratory impulses connect
With our own being all whose hues reflect
The essence of our own identity ;
And then we join the world's great pageant, decked
In their cast-off inheritance, and cry
To ghosts of fame, love, grief, despair, — " Wast thou not I ? "

XVII.

Not vain, perchance, the Grecian sophist's boast, —
That, 'mid the trophies of the Trojan war,
By the deep gash where passed his parted ghost,
He knew the very armor which he bore,
When in a hero's shape to Asia's shore
He crossed with the leagued hosts Achilles led,
To claim the beauteous prize false Paris tore
By Venus' aid from her white marriage-bed,
To bear two nations' curses on her guilty head.

XVIII.

Such visions may be fruitless, — but not vain
The deep, delicious sympathy we feel,
When to our couch of solitude and pain
The phantoms of some kindred nature steal,
And like angelic visitants reveal
The deathlessness of love, — that not alone
We bear our burden, — with each pang we feel
Their pulses beat responsive, and their tone
Of soul-transfusing pity mingles with our moan.

XIX.

And as the sculptor from the rival forms
Of loveliest nymphs each faultless feature chose,
To mould the matchless marble maid who warms
The air with her chaste breath, which comes and goes
From her unheaving breast of Parian snows, —
So from the quenchless stars of mind, which gleam
O'er life's dark tide that with their radiance glows,
Form we some guiding beacon; in whose beam,
Peaceful and pure, our earth-born griefs fade as a dream.

XX.

Then turn we to the sage, historic Muse,
She of the pallid cheek, but eye whose ray
Is lustrous as the sunbeam, and endues
With its life-giving warmth the mouldering clay.
Lo ! in her tower — curtained with mosses gray,
Shook by time's waves, that thunder down the steep
Thence to eternity — day after day
She sits; while by her feet life's surges sweep,
As from Niagara's height the world of waters leap.

XXI.

The choral cry of the great brotherhood
Of being strikes the spiritual ear
Like the deep voice of that resounding flood, —
The diapason of a hemisphere,
Which listening forests shiver as they hear ; —
And, like that cataract's ascending spray,
Their disembodied spirits' atmosphere
Melts in the sun's absorbing kiss, whose ray
Paints there the rainbow hope, from morn till close of day.

XXII.

Turn we from present joys and cares awhile,
To seek the hermitess within her cell
Illumined by her pale and solemn smile,
Where she and twin-born Contemplation dwell ;
And though she deign not ope the scrolls which tell
A nation's fate, or paint its hero's face,
We of some chance-found leaflet, ill or well,
The blotted imagery may retrace,
To deck the pictured walls of memory's dwelling-place.

XXIII.

Crave we of them their time-compelling gift,
Put thou thy fearless spirit's hand in mine,
And in their cloud-borne chariot we will drift
Through the blue depths, mirrored in ocean's brine,
Till, where man, art, and nature did combine
To deck a garden, now o'ergrown with weeds
Which overtop the olive and the vine,
And hide each trace of chivalry's high deeds,
We'll pause awhile to gaze, and rein our phantom steeds.

CANTO SECOND.

THE ISLAND BRIDE.

CANTO SECOND.

I.

'T is morning, — and the golden sunbeams gush
From o'er the mountains' high, embattled wall ;
And nature's half-awakened features flush,
Beneath those vivifying rays, that fall
In rainbow tints upon the silver pall
Which night's maternal watchfulness had spread,
During her loving vigils, over all, —
While her unfathomable love was shed,
In wealth of dewy tears, on each fair floweret's head.

II.

Beneath those mountains' tutelary screen
Stretches the broad and variegated vale,
Through whose far lengths the tranquil river's sheen
Paints many a hamlet, many a creeping sail,
And purple vineyards, groves of olive pale,
Green fields, gray towers, the peopled haunts of men,
And orange groves whose fragrance loads the gale ; —
Which hears the varied tones of life, and then
Beareth its mingled freight to cheer some lonely glen.

III.

But not upon the scenes of peaceful life
Shineth to-day the all-beholding sun ;
The turf, hoof-scarred and stained with bloody strife,
Telleth of sylvan happiness undone ;
And the scared Seasons' frightened footsteps shun
The spot, where Battle's ruthless tread hath pressed
To dust the young, upspringing corn, and won
The laurel crown that wreathes the conquering crest, —
Trampling, unfilial, o'er earth's palpitating breast.

IV.

Pale Spring, with tearful eyes of tender blue,
And trembling girlish feet, and clasped hands,
Beareth her stores of variegated hue
To some unvexed, unviolated lands ;
While with flushed cheek indignant Summer stands,
Striving in vain to raise the trodden flower ;
And for her gifts strewn on the thankless sands,
Autumn bewails, in many a fitful shower,
Leaving, with oft-reverted look, her vine-clad bower.

V.

'T was as the Argonautic chief had sown
The fabled dragon's teeth o'er that broad field,
Whence had a mail-clad human harvest grown,
Which must its fruits to Death's red sickle yield.
Like glossy leaf glittered the knightly shield,
And white plumes danced like the wide-waving grain ;
And where the lark's glad matin-song had filled
The cloudless concave, rose the trumpet's strain,
To whose shrill challenge far-off echoes called again.

VI.

Can we not trace the rival blazonries
Upon each standard wrought by fingers fair,
In tints which mock the sunset's gorgeous dyes,
And flutter rustling in the morning air ?
Lo ! Spain's armorial bearings glitter there,
Where stands yon canvass-city's broad array ;
Yet her proud realm doth the loathed Moslem share,
And silver white, amid the golden day,
Gleams from the taper minaret the crescent's ray.

VII.

But now the Saracen must yield, at length,
His last stronghold in that blood-bought domain ;
Now faileth his last grasp's convulsive strength,
With which he clung to the fair land of Spain ;
Back to Sahara's treeless, trackless plain
Must turn his baffled footsteps ; all the hours
Of bygone centuries crowd upon his brain,
With his last look on gray Granada's towers,
And fairy palaces, and many-fountained bowers.

VIII.

Long time those circling mountain-tops had seen
The Christian's conflict with the infidel ;
O'er many a gallant knight the grass was green,
And some yet slept where yesterday they fell.
And many a warrior-priest those ranks did swell,
More skilled perchance to wield the sword than pen,
And to count blows than well-worn beads to tell ; —
'T was not by subtile metaphysics then,
Alone, the zealous would convince their fellow-men.

IX.

With camp and church did the court, too, unite
To wreathe, at times, war's panoply with flowers ;
And often those next day to meet in fight
Passed in joint revelry the evening hours.
And queenly beauty lent her potent powers,
And her soft breath the flame of valor fanned ;
Nor shrank she, e'en beneath those Moorish towers,
Beside her wounded champion's couch to stand,
And in her own soft palm to press his dying hand.

X.

And like the moon amid her train of stars,
Or the tall lily in its stainless pride
Unbent, where War's red steps the landscape mars,
Stood Isabella at Fernando's side, —
The lioness and crafty fox allied.
Hers was that noble nature that can dare
As well as counsel ; — firm, yet gentle-eyed,
Unblenching, where war's reddest lightnings glare,
She stood, to smile on hope, to animate despair.

XI.

Born amid strife, and nurtured on the high
Glacierlike cliffs of life, she thence had learned
To look on danger with untroubled eye ;
And along paths, whence manhood might have turned
Dizzy and trembling, she, with heart that spurned
The slippery peril, walked with even gait ;
And where the blazing sunbeams would have burned
Aught but the eagle's vision, kept her state,
Like that most royal bird, high o'er the storms of fate.

XII.

There seems an undefined analogy
Between the dwellers of a mountain land —
Where the free spirit climbeth to the sky,
And to Titanic stature doth expand —
And those who from the heights of old command
Survey life's plains with vision unconfined
By petty barriers, and feel how grand
The fellowship of God with human-kind,
And learn the strength with deep humility combined.

XIII.

Such might not be man's nature, but 't was hers ;
Right womanly she kept her royal state ;
And not a gemlike virtue which confers
Its radiance on the humblest peasant's mate,
But served her diadem to consecrate, —
A consort's love, a mother's tender care,
A soul unyielding, yet compassionate.
What dastard but a hero's deeds would dare,
With a queen's eye to praise, a woman's heart to share ?

XIV.

But her Castilian spirit could not brook
That there, upon her fair ancestral land,
With his encroaching step and scornful look,
The unbelieving Saracen should stand ;
And therefore had she roused the loyal band
Who steer by glory as their cynosure,
And in her service had they drawn the brand,
And sworn that they no longer would endure
To see salvation's emblem mocked at by the Moor.

XV.

And they had conquered, and with reeking sword,
At length, that stern chivalric vow fulfilled ;
And they had driven that invading horde
Forth from the lands which they so long had tilled.
In the lone mosque the muezzin's voice was stilled,
Which called Mohammed's followers to prayer ;
And now the radiance of the cross should gild
Those domes, and shed its beams of promise there,
In morning's earliest light and twilight's dusky air.

XVI.

But dare I trace such words ? Alas ! how loud,
With his wrenched limbs still quivering from the rack,
Answers each martyr from his bloody shroud,
And bids us send our asking spirits back,
Along foul persecution's blood-stained track,
And read those promises of happiness,
In the depeopled plain, the city's sack,
The blazing pile, the dungeon's weariness,
Which tell how man knew Him who came mankind to bless !

XVII.

The Koran slew its thousands ; hath the cross,
Or have that symbol's followers, slaughtered less ?
Lo ! through the tombstone's half-effacing moss
Decipher Scotland's tale of bitterness ;
Read England's blood-writ annals of distress ;
See the French ermine with its crimson stain.
The Inquisition's halls are tenantless ;
But there the echoing death-cry doth remain
Of those whose earthly loss still promised heavenly gain.

XVIII.

'T were vain to rake the ashes of the past,
And drag those ghastly relics into sight ;
Thank God ! such mad delusions could not last
In revelation's clear, unclouded light !
They could not ? Who are we that have the right
To play the Pharisee to ages gone ;
To cry with Pilate, Lo ! our hands are white !
And, guiltless, cast at guilt the cruel stone ? —
Is 't by denouncing crime the accomplice doth atone ?

XIX.

We say we serve one God, whose single name
Is heard through Christendom in daily prayer ;
But is that God in very truth the same ?
And doth he not a Protean nature wear ?
As many Gods, methinks, that worship share
As slumber in old superstition's tomb ;
Each man doth in his heart an idol bear,
To which his spirit kneeleth in that gloom,
While he on perjured lips doth Christ's dear name assume.

XX.

Of that false human heart what man might dare,
E'en to his own most solitary eye,
To lay the foul and festering contents bare,
And strip the veil from its dark mystery ?
It hath its palace-chambers fair and high,
Where mirth and dignity may keep their state ;
But deep-sunk dungeons underneath them lie,
Where, loaded with the clanking fetters' weight,
Strange, grisly forms do howl and execrate.

XXI.

Most happy he who in those chains can bind
The demon-spirits of his nature, — those
Which else enslave the subjugated mind,
And all its gentler attributes inclose
In those corroding caverns, where their woes
Count like a hermit's beads each weary hour,
Till Justice to Remorse the record shows,
Beneath whose lash the shrieking soul doth cower;
Passion to strength still comes with Dejanira's dower.

XXII.

Humanity's distorted growth appalls
Him who would venture through its dark abyss.
Why, e'en the virtues are as cannibals,
And feed upon their fellows; — with a kiss
Do they betray their victims; and in this
Vinelike embrace around their strength they glide;
Till, having drunk their lifeblood and their bliss,
Ambition, Avarice, Envy, Lust, and Pride
Are, under virtue's names, knelt to and deified.

XXIII.

To what far planet shall we turn to meet
That priceless thing, a rightly balanced mind;
Where the foul upas-tree of man's conceit
Pours not its blighting breath upon the wind;
Where men bow not, in adoration blind,
To crumbling mummies of the past, — but, free
And self-reliant, turn them not behind
In gratulation; nor their progress see
In what man is or has been, but what man shall be?

XXIV.

If man indeed shall ever cease to be
Marked by foul atheism's leprous stain;
If e'er he weigh time with eternity, —
That which shall pass with that which shall remain:
The hoary miser with his hoarded gain
Still totters to God's presence; youth doth burn
Its soul, as incense, in Delusion's fane;
And age is slow youth's lessons to unlearn;
And still each differing creed each differing creed doth spurn.

XXV.

What were the victims on those altars piled,
With those of our own century compared?
Why, Slaughter in those times was but a child!
But now, his giant sinews hath he bared.
Of those who Waterloo's dread summons shared,
How many sought the trysting-place! how few
Were by red Battle's gory welcome spared!
What were the hecatombs old idols knew
To those we now round Glory's phantom-statue strew?

XXVI.

Listen! Is 't thunder mutters overhead?
Is 't nature's lightning flashing broad and high?
Why doth the eastern sun look crimson red,
And the pale moon tread trembling through the sky?
What doth the far-eyed carrion-bird descry,
While the keen-scented jackal snuffs the gale?
Why sounds in England's halls the funeral cry,
Where maiden, bride, and matron do bewail?
Within those happy homes, why should such cheeks be pale?

XXVII.

Lo ! where the Sutlej rolls o'er India's sands,
The monster holds his ghastly revels yet ;
And, like a vintager, with crimson hands,
Pledgeth the gory goblet, dripping wet,
To the dread guests who at that feast have met : —
“ Spare not, — there is enough, — drink fearlessly ;
Soon may we such another harvest get ! ”
O'er rival hosts he shouteth, “ Victory ! ”
With the gorged vulture then closeth his glazing eye.

XXVIII.

And thou, my country ! to thy granite shore,
While here I pace the ocean-parted strand,
Turneth the spirit's vision, to explore
Thy towns, thy homesteads, searching for the band
Who, like the peasant-chiefs of Switzerland,
Preferred the barren snow-field and the wrath
Of the fierce tempest to the harsh command
That chains the soul. All home and custom hath
That 's dearest trampled they in their lone pilgrim-path.

XXIX.

And can we not, their offspring, keep unchanged
The precepts which those Spartan spirits taught ?
Shall not the children worship, unestranged,
The Deity for whom their fathers fought ?
Shall we, like unbelieving Israel, set at naught
Our ancient faith, and idol-shrines increase,
Where idiot Glory mocks at nobler Thought ?
Shall the dead patriot's warning accents cease ?
Believest thou in God ? Believe thou, then, in Peace !

XXX.

Our fathers fought for Freedom, — poured their blood
To vivify her freshly planted tree ;
And, e'er it consummate its earliest bud,
Shall the axe mar its stateliness ? Shall we
Pour ours for some deluding fantasy ?
Then nerveless, sinewless, alas ! remain
Victims of fierce misrule or tyranny,
Or with the barren laurel strive, in vain,
To hide on our red brows the murder-mark of Cain ?

XXXI.

'T is true, it is a glorious sight to see
The hosts before the combat has begun, —
To mark, in complicated unity,
Those thousand natures moulded into one.
The maddened pulse doth beat in unison
With the clear trumpet's spirit-stirring song,
And the stern heart echoes the booming gun,
And the defying soul is borne along,
Breasting the storm, on eagle-pinions fiercely strong.

XXXII.

But when the cannon's iron lips are mute,
And ringing clarions have forgot to sound, —
When the deep-thundering charge, the hot pursuit,
Have left their victims on the lonely ground, —
The electric chain of sympathy unbound
Giveth to each identity ; — he feels,
That, of a thousand brave, the one is crowned ;
Too late the writhing crowd to Heaven appeals,
Crushed 'neath some giant chief's remorseless chariot-wheels.

XXXIII.

But thoughts like these belonged not to that time ;
They took of moralizing scanty heed ;
They counted not destruction as a crime, —
With them the motive justified the deed.
Bright tears and poets' praises were the meed
Of him who fell in fight ; — his soul was shriven
By holy priests, who taught it in their creed,
That whosoe'er by his good sword had given
To God a home on earth should be his guest in heaven.

CANTO THIRD.



THE ISLAND BRIDE.

CANTO THIRD.

I.

Now, through the Christian camp, the mingled hum,
And martial helms with peaceful garlands crowned,
Told that the day of jubilee had come,
To give again that trampled battle-ground
To its congenial peacefulness. Around,
The jocund hosts, in festival array,
With their glad shouts the ringing trumpet drowned,
And in exulting triumph take their way
To raise upon those towers the badge of Christian sway.

II.

Each knight upon his freshly blazoned shield
Had pictured the devices he had won
By gallant deeds in many a well-fought field;
And which in after ages many a son
Should bear, as proofs of what those sires had done,
When to his sons their story he should tell,
Bidding them form their souls in unison
With those brave spirits, who, whate'er befell,
For God, their queen, their country, ever fought so well.

III.

And the bold barons, with their feudal trains,
File upon file, in martial order sweep ;
With golden spurs, bright scarfs, and glittering reins,
Unbrokenly their serried ranks they keep.
The chargers' hoofs ring hollowly and deep ;
And snowy foam-flakes, which their harness fleck,
Tell how their fiery natures would o'erleap
Those iron bonds, as, spurning every check,
They toss the floating mane, and arch the glossy neck.

IV.

All ages mingled there ; — the veteran,
With thin, white locks o'er his scarred temples shed,
Whose winters numbered man's allotted span ;
And he from whose full eye and noble head
The grace of conscious manhood had not fled ;
And he whose helmet's lifted vizor showed
A cheek still tinged with youth's too fleeting red ;
While, with lithe limbs that well his steed bestrode,
The long-haired, bright-eyed page beside his master rode.

V.

And as that human torrent poured along,
And to the conquered city's gates rolled on,
Amid that stern and dark-browed warrior-throng —
Like wreaths of summer blossoms thrown upon
The darkly rushing tide of Acheron,
Which with the unaccustomed beauty smiles —
Rode many a gentle, blushing Amazon,
Victor of victors, who, with wealth of wiles,
In accent, lip, and eye, the rudest heart beguiles.

VI.

There, too, Rome's gorgeous hierarchy came, —
The shaven priest, the youthful acolyte,
The bishop, on whose brows, like tongue of flame,
The jewelled mitre shed its flashing light.
Their varied vestments foiled the dazzled sight, —
Blue, purple, crimson, broidered o'er with gold, —
Emblems of more than apostolic might ;
In pallid hands the holy pyx they hold,
And high o'er human pomp their sacred flag unfold.

VII.

Followed by courtly dame and highborn maid,
Whose dark eyes shed a starlike radiance round,
Came Isabel, — the soul of the crusade, —
Her forehead with the regal circlet bound.
The corslet's scales of azure steel surround
Her rebel-heaving breast ; of darkest green,
Her velvet robe, descending, swept the ground ;
But, more than all such attributes, her mien,
Her look of matron majesty, proclaimed the queen.

VIII.

From each knight's lance the gaudy pennon streamed,
Like tulips by the morning breezes bent ;
Their clinging, sinewy limbs in armor gleamed,
As o'er their steel-clad steeds the gallants leant.
The mischief-making page's merriment
Marked the fair cheeks which at their praises glowed,
And crozier, cuirass, scarf, plume, lances, blent,
To the far gazer's dazzled vision showed,
As if some sun-kissed stream through that broad valley flowed.

IX.

And now the foremost of the glittering band
Have reached the city's gates, and entered there ;
The rest in silent expectation stand,
Till thunder-throated cannon rend the air,
And trumpets change their warlike tones to prayer.
Lo ! 't is the silver-shining cross restored
To its undimmed effulgence ; — thousands share
One common impulse ; — sovereign, knight, and lord,
In rapt enthusiasm, bent them and adored.

X.

Joy to the conqueror ! — but for him, alas !
Who looked his last on that delicious plain,
And saw the sceptre of his fathers pass
Into another's hand, — his eyeballs strain
In one embracing gaze ; through every vein
The coiling pulses dart with serpent-sting,
And the big tear-drops fall like summer rain ;
But to the heart such showers no verdure bring, —
The exile's spirit knows no second blossoming.

XI.

But who is he that from the mountain-track,
With pilgrim scrip and staff beside him laid,
Upon that gorgeous pageant looketh back
From underneath the cork-tree's massive shade ?
With such a glance had Marius surveyed
Rome's towering capitol ; Napoleon
Had thus upon his ocean-prison strayed ;
Or Aristides watched the beam that shone
Where in the lessening distance gleamed the Parthenon.

XII.

Manhood sits throned upon his brow, his eye,
Which to his troubled soul gives utterance,
Proclaims him born beneath a southern sky ;
Large, dark, and radiantly bright, its glance
Hath the profoundness of prophetic trance,
And not the warrior's restlessness ; but blind
To knightly panoply, shield, plume, and lance,
Like some lone star in its own beams enshrined,
It burneth with the deep, unflickering fires of mind.

XIII.

The bright sun is unheeded, — the fair scene,
Where nature speaks her welcoming aloud,
Is all for him as if it had not been ;
His countenance, convulsed and gloomy-browed,
Hangs o'er the valley like a brooding cloud,
Which from Vesuvius' quenchless crater streams,
Unfurling o'er green earth its murky shroud
Across heaven's blue concavity, — while gleams
Of lightning tell the Titan soul with which it teems.

XIV.

And why these flashings of deep passion ? Why
Do his big pulses bound in turbid race,
And his clenched, sinewy palms entreat the sky ?
Why should such lowering gloominess deface
That brow, calm contemplation's dwelling-place ?
Why is that manly, patient spirit bowed,
Letting despair and agony erase
Upon that cheek of bronze, before so proud,
The pregnant furrows fertilizing thought had ploughed ?

XV.

He weareth not the Moslem's hated dress ; —
He seeth not, in memory's glass displayed,
Through exile's blinding tears of bitterness,
The shaded fountain where his children played
Left lone and desolate ; — within the glade
No brother fell beneath the Christian sword ;
No plighted maiden, pallid and afraid,
O'er whom, as from an urn, his love was poured,
Is ravished from his arms to serve some foreign lord.

XVI.

No stranger treads his temples ; — from his hand
No shivered, unavenging weapon fell ; —
Famine and faction with the traitor-band
Surrendered not his leaguered citadel.
His is the greater grief that hears the knell
Of dead hopes, slain by fate and circumstance ;
What have been, have been, and with memory dwell :
'T is deeper hell, when fadeth as a trance
Imagination's unenjoyed inheritance.

XVII.

A young boy sits beside him, who in his
Has intertwined his hand. His eager eye,
Unmindful of those racking reveries,
Mirrors the distant pageant merrily :
Heaven's cloudless, clear tranquillity doth lie
Upon his face, where, scarcely in their birth,
Thoughts glimmer like the restless butterfly ;
And, like a fountain sparkling from the earth,
Bursts bubbling from his breast the melody of mirth.

XVIII.

Unthoughtful and uncomprehendingly
His vision tracked that triumph o'er the plain,
Restless and dazzled, — when a sudden cry
Escaped his lips, — he turned as if in pain ;
His father's grasp with a convulsive strain
Had tightened upon his. Well might he shrink
From that distorted glance of fierce disdain ;
As, at the fount where he was wont to drink,
Some glistening, red-eyed snake had scared him from the brink.

XIX.

And his young gaze of round-eyed wonderment
Questioned his father with its mute appeal ;
And still he strove, with artless blandishment,
To win him from that mood. His loving zeal
Hath half its purpose ; those pale lips unseal ;
His spirit from its slumber half awoke ;
Wild words his haunting fantasies reveal ;
Unconscious of companionship, the yoke
Fell from his soul ; — in stern soliloquy he spoke.

XX.

“ O human trust ! on what a broken reed
Do thy fond victims vainly lean for rest !
How dost thou, warmed there like the viper-breed,
Sting into anguish man's deluded breast !
How many a sob of agony repressed,
And tear of blood, are shed upon thy shrine !
How many an imprecation unexpressed
Rings in the empty heart at thee and thine,
While round our barren path thy mocking meteors shine !

XXI.

“ My cherished, visionary hopes are fled,
Like morning’s soulless, unsubstantial mist ;
Through years of weary poverty they led
Me on, till youth in lingering farewell kissed
My seaworn cheek, and manhood did enlist
Me in his struggling legions : now, alas !
Each crumbling foothold ceaseth to exist ;
And giant forms of human grandeur pass,
Elusive as the shapes that crowd the wizard’s glass.

XXII.

“ In vain my spirit did conceive, — in vain
Did the dark billows round the frozen pole
Utter their salutation, at whose strain
The sleeping embryo stirred within my soul ;
And thrillingly there darted through the whole
Of my rapt being a deep feeling, fraught
With the electric flame Prometheus stole
From the defrauded Godhead. Earth hath naught
Of rapture like the throb that tells the birth of Thought !

XXIII.

“ And with a spirit-grasp it bore me on,
Month after weary month of dull delay,
While doubt and caution coldly looked upon
My grand, incomprehensible essay ;
It fed with fire my eye’s undazzled ray,
And calmed the ebb and flow of life’s red tide,
’Mid royalty’s ephemeral array,
And through all perils, like a goddess-bride,
Stood, with sustaining presence, ever by my side.

XXIV.

“ I ’d thought to vindicate the spirit’s claims
To proud præminence in courts of kings ;
That the calm step which leads to peaceful aims
Might trample into dust all meaner things ;
That, high above the path where venom’d stings
Of creeping passions wound our toiling feet,
Genius might soar on tireless eagle-wings, —
Careless of all the baffling storms that beat, —
To some cloud-cleaving pinnacle, its regal seat.

XXV.

“ I met till now undauntedly and bold
The supercilious sneer, the frozen glance ;
My prophet-vision recked not of the cold,
Unsympathizing human countenance.
What were the guerdons of the puny lance,
Their acres, castles, counted all in one,
Titles of proud, heraldic utterance,
To my broad realms white-handed thought hath won,
Beneath the midnight track of the unsleeping sun ?

XXVI.

“ Hath won ! ah, no ! in vain, alas, in vain
I drag my shackled limbs along the shore,
Bound in necessity’s unyielding chain,
Whose iron eateth to my being’s core !
Vainly did thought, on dovelike wing, explore
The western waste of waters, and did bring
Its tribute, like the wanderer of yore ;
Ne’er shall I greet those fair shores’ welcoming,
Nor e’er these weary limbs on their green borders fling !

XXVII.

“ ’T is not the elements that bar my claim
To that sea-born inheritance. Unswayed
By pomp or power, dear Earth is still the same
For every filial son ; — her waves have made
Themselves my coursers ; — the bright sun, arrayed,
As in barbaric monarch’s panoply,
With glittering golden spoils, and gems inlaid,
Doth in his westering footsteps beckon me
To follow to his throne beyond the barrier sea.

XXVIII.

“ ’T is man who fails me ; — vainly have I sued
To him to aid my mighty enterprise ;
I’ve sunk my nature’s sternness to each mood,
Each tone, to which his fickle heart replies ;
Glory and gain before his greedy eyes
I’ve painted dazzlingly ; have pierced the veil
That guards the holier spirit’s mysteries,
Trusting through nobler impulse to prevail ; —
But sloth and envy still forbid to hoist the sail.

XXIX.

“ Traitors and unbelieving ! — they would reap
Another’s harvest-field ; but still the sea
Doth well her unconfided secret keep,
Or they would have the lion’s share. E’en she,
That paragon of magnanimity, —
Beneath whose matron-sceptre’s gentle sway
I’d stretch a hemisphere’s convexity, —
Urged by their caitiff-counsels, turns away,
Nor grants those unfound realms the giver to obey.

XXX.

“ Now hope is dead ; — unheeded and forgot,
My bones must fill a nameless sepulchre ;
No lineage shall deck my burial-spot,
Or wear the crown Columbus doth confer.
Would I might lift each spirit-murderer,
As in an eagle’s talons, to the sky,
Point him those lands than Eden lovelier, —
Then dash the tortoise-minded wretch from high,
And in his shivered armor let him quivering lie ! ”

XXXI.

He sank upon the ground ; — it was an hour
Of agony that seeketh not relief ;
His goaded spirit bent beneath the power
Of that o’ersweeping hurricane of grief.
But when the ruthless storm hath spent its brief
Ungoverned interval of frenzied rage,
All-glitteringly upon the autumn-leaf
Hangs the bright rain-drop, — winds no longer wage
Their warfare, — and soft showers earth’s woes assuage.

XXXII.

’T was thus with him, — he felt that passion sweep
In fury o’er his desolated mind,
And bear away, like the remorseless deep,
The idols in its sanctuary enshrined ;
But, ’mid those ruins, shook and undermined,
His soul looked up to the blue vault, — he cried,
“ Lead thou, O God, thy creature, trembling, blind !
He, who hath felt himself to thee allied,
Is still thy servant, — let him in thy strength abide ! ”

XXXIII.

How peaceful, through the tempest's rifted walls,
The first blue gleam of heaven meets the sight!
How tenderly the earliest sunbeam falls,
More dear than all its brotherhood of light!
Upon the swift-receding skirts of night
How gently hangs the rainbow-colored ray!
How musical the streamlet's tones unite
With gladdened nature's ringing roundelay,
While the low-sobbing clouds in white robes steal away!

XXXIV.

But clearer than the sky's celestial blue,
That tells of peacefulness beyond the gloom, —
Than the pellucid sunbeam, looking through
The curtained clouds, upon some loved one's tomb, —
Lovelier than new-born Summer's earliest bloom, —
Is the deep calm when tempted man hath prayed;
When hope's young smile his darkness doth illume;
When passion's waves by Christ's pale feet are laid,
And his still voice replies, "'T is I, be not afraid."

XXXV.

And that calm fell upon him, — and on that
There broke a sun of gladness. Lo! the boy
Hath started from the hillock where he sat,
And cries in accents of familiar joy, —
"See, see, our friend whose aidance shall destroy
Thy moody mournfulness!" A horseman came
With priceless tidings, free from doubt's alloy, —
"My gracious mistress greets thy honored name;
This night, her willing ear will hear thee plead thy claim."

CANTO FOURTH.

THE ISLAND BRIDE.

CANTO FOURTH.

I.

THE earth hath many altars, — many a spot,
Whence the heart's wanderers no longer roam ;
Where truant thoughts, unheeded or forgot,
Come, like the weary bird at evening, home.
The dim cathedral's consecrated dome, —
The forest, far from human neighbourhood, —
The moonlit beach, white with the snowy foam, —
But most, the lonely ruin, giveth food
To silent meditation's melancholy mood.

II.

Not to the heart by sorrow unreclaimed
From the world-worship unto which it bowed ;
Not to the eagle-spirit yet untamed,
Who 'd soar above the snow-peak's glittering shroud :
But to the chastened soul, in whom the proud,
Cold earth hath quenched youth's high aspirings ;
Whose claims to glory man hath disallowed ;
Decay, to it, a desolate pleasure brings,
Peopled by dead hopes, phantom heroes, crownless kings.

III.

Around the shattered shaft and mouldering plinth
The mantling ivy all-unconscious grows ;
Across the garden's lonely labyrinth
Its shade the mutilated marble throws ;
The banquet-hall, the dungeon-vault, unclose
Their portals, gay or ghastly, — and between
Grim crevices the telltale sunshine flows ;
Or where a world's tumultuous tide hath been,
The mellow moonlight sleeps, all pulseless and serene.

IV.

Such is, but such was not upon that night,
The scene within the Alhambra's palace-bowers ;
Her gilded roofs were redolent of light,
Her halls of gracefulness, her courts of flowers :
The frequent fountain flung its fairy showers
Athwart the perfumed air, with silver sound ;
Music and mirth reëchoed from her towers ;
The very shadows danced along the ground,
And many a graceful laugh spoke the light heart's rebound.

V.

There is a hall within that gorgeous pile,
Where Moslem monarchs held their audience-state ;
High, from the marble-columned peristyle,
Springs the light arch, with carvings complicate, —
Where gilded vine-boughs bear their mimic freight
O'er fretwork of vermilion and cobalt,
Twining around quaint forms their airy weight,
Until the tangled vision is at fault
Amid the intricacies of the soaring vault.

VI.

And there, apart from the molesting crowd,
Begirt by prelates sage and warriors brave,
The chosen few within that court allowed,
Columbus stood, collectedly and grave,
Of unseen wonders, o'er the distant wave
That lay, discoursing to the matron queen,
Whose kindling soul a rapt attention gave :
He spoke, she heard, as they had equals been, —
They were, in kingly thought, in majesty of mien.

VII.

'T is not for me to trace the words of fire
Which from his lips in varying accents flowed ;
Inadequate were pencil, pen, or lyre
To give the soul that through those features glowed,
Unless some prophet painter had bestowed
His genius on the theme. The Sadducee
Had owned the deathlessness that spirit showed :
No caitiff-coward ever prayed as he
For life, — for life ! he plead for immortality.

VIII.

And in the ever-varying looks that turned,
And to his sway their chained expression lent,
Was seen the fire which in his bosom burned,
Reflected, as the flaming occident
Mirrored upon the glassy lake. Intent,
While o'er the heart's roused chords his accents swept,
Discordant souls in modulation blent,
And with an equal pulse the measure kept :
Ambition, avarice, heard ; white-handed pity wept.

IX.

Some listened to the eloquence which told
All the Venetian exile had rehearsed,
Of groves of spices, armies clad in gold ;
Right well in all those legends was he versed ;
And their young-fledged attention still he nursed
With schemes of glory, hopes of boundless sway.
Coldness and doubt his earnestness dispersed ;
It seemed that visibly before them lay
The pearl-besprinkled shores of India and Cathay.

X.

Wouldst build thy temple upon human pride,
Thou 'lt find its corner-stone but insecure ;
No longer than the quicksand's fickle tide
Shall its deceitful steadfastness endure ;
Some nearer, gaudier bait shall still allure
Ambition from his faith ; envy shall part,
Or doubt corrode, the bands we deemed most sure ; —
But wouldst thou mock at violence or art,
Build thou upon that fragile thing, — a woman's heart.

XI.

In that faith found he safety. She had heard,
Unmoved, of orient gems profusely piled ;
No thoughts of fame her gentle pulses stirred ;
Her heart by promised realms was unbeguiled :
But that lands where eternal Eden smiled
Should never kneel to those whom she adored,
The blessed Virgin and her holy child, —
The crystal drops, which from her eyelids poured,
Pledged the souls' light to them whose darkness she deplored.

XII.

He read that omen of his fate aright ;
And as the sun upon heaven's pearly tears
Hangs the refracted glory of his light,
His sunlike soul on those translucent spheres
Formed with its rays a bow, like that which rears
Hope's stairway to the rosy firmament ;
Joy paid him then her long-withheld arrears ;
It was that thrilling hour, so rarely sent,
When two coequal souls in one great thought are blent.

XIII.

There are no gleams, perchance, to mortals given,
In our deep-yearning, darkly groping state,
Which with more vividness foreshadow heaven,
Than when some giant spirit finds its mate ;
When, through the veil which circumstance or fate
Around our heaven-born impulses hath wove,
Soul speaks to soul, and all we venerate,
In the bright denizens of heaven above,
Stands hand in hand with all that 's dear of human love.

XIV.

Not love, the theme of amatory strains,
That storm of mingled tenderness and wrath ;
Unto his mind, its weapons and its chains
Were as the schoolboy's puny sword of lath,—
A rose-leaf trampled in the lion's path ;
But there 's a passion purified from sense,
Which in its white, ethereal essence hath
A flame, than such more lastingly intense :
It is a kindred soul's unsexed omnipotence.

XV.

Hath man not need of such ? His nature had ;
And at that fount of love and sympathy
He sat him down in strength, serenely glad ;
Her spirit filled his being's vacancy ;
His unslaked lip had found earth's streams to be
Turbid, although they ran o'er sands of gold ;
But this, which flowed so pure and gushingly,
Was like a mountain streamlet, clear and cold,
And vast as is the sea round some broad realm unrolled.

XVI.

" This day," he cried, " O queen, hath seen thy power
Give to its ancient faith polluted Spain ;
Throughout the land, from minaret and tower,
The symbol of the Saviour gleams again ;
And shall the infidel in Zion reign ?
Shall the lone garden, where the midnight sod
Shuddered to feel his tear-drops, still remain,
With Calvary's hill, by paynim scoffers trod ?
The Temple be the haunt of enemies of God ?

XVII.

" The golden realms to which I 'd lead the way
Shall furnish with their wealth a new crusade ;
And all the lands which own the Christian sway
Be in avenging steel once more arrayed :
The boon for which so many a saint hath prayed,
The prize for which so many a king hath striven,
Glory for which all Europe drew the blade,
Shall to thy consecrated reign be given,
And from those holy courts Mohammed's slaves be driven.

XVIII.

“ And those unmeasured lands beyond the sea,
Shall they be left to darkness and despair ?
And shall the gospel’s sweet tranquillity
Ne’er with its beams of promise enter there ?
Shall the deluded heathen breathe his prayer
To powerless images of wood and stone ?
Shall the soft Sabbath-bell upon the air
Ne’er pour the music of its silver tone ;
And through the wood’s dim aisles but soulless breezes moan ?

XIX.

“ Shall man be glad, and never know to whom
His throbbing bosom’s thankfulness to speak ?
Shall he be sorrowful, and through the gloom
Grove stumblingly, a comforter to seek ?
Dry thou the silent tear on woman’s cheek ;
Let not man’s agony unaided call ;
Through their accursèd rites, O, let the meek
Accents of pity cry ! — shall sin enthrall
One half the world, since Christ hath died for all ?

XX.

“ Hast thou not seen some mighty torrent leap,
While echoing forests to its groan reply,
Down the abysmal gulf, with ceaseless sweep ;
Nor thought each drop a soul, each tone a cry,
Pleading against its sunless destiny ?
To fancy’s ear such is the voice of them
Who sweep unransomed to eternity ;
But every soul thou savest, like a gem,
Shall lend its lustre to thy heavenly diadem.”

XXI.

Words are not eloquence ; — the empty sound
Hath of its finer, fleeting essence naught ;
But all the flashing, tearful glances round
From his roused soul its inspiration caught :
And she was won. At her command they brought
The cross, the loadstar of Spain's chivalry ;
On silken folds by her own fingers wrought :
" Be mine the enterprise ; this flag shall be,"
She said, " thy guide to thy immortal destiny."

XXII.

Kneeling, he took the standard which she gave,
And to his breast its gathered folds he pressed ;
All-tremblingly that heart, so coldly brave,
Poured its ungoverned pulses through his breast.
'T was steeled against all dangers which infest
A hero's path, to thwart him or assist ;
But joy was such an unaccustomed guest,
That his cheek quivered, and a blinding mist
Came o'er his sight ; — a tear fell on the hand he kissed.

XXIII.

But mind soon claimed its empire. All-serene,
No trace of short-lived weakness or of tears,
He raised his head, and, with unaltered mien,
Stood like a conqueror among his peers.
" Lady ! thy smile like the bright sunshine clears
All clouds from off my path ; my ocean-car
Methinks already in its radiance steers ;
Sunlight to joy, — to grief a beacon-star, —
Remembered, cherished, whether fortune make or mar."

XXIV.

His thanks were brief. He might not trust to speech,
Lest the long pent up torrent overboil ;
The world had long accustomed him to teach
Silence to wildest thoughts in their turmoil.
For the heart schooled in loneliness and toil,
Few syllables embody many a thought ;
Words are the harvest of affection's soil.
To his prophetic mind the realms he sought
Seemed his, and were to her in grateful tribute brought.

XXV.

There followed words of homage and of grace,
And courtly forms tedious to act or tell.
And now on nature's calmly slumbering face
The star-inwoven veil of midnight fell ;
Through the hushed palace-roofs, the captive's cell,
Upon all life, forgetfulness bestows
Its balm, — in camp, and court, and citadel,
Monarch and slave, glad thoughts and weary woes,
Lie bound alike in the still-heaving fetters of repose :

XXVI.

Save where upon the walls the sentinel
Hears and returns the watchword and reply ;
Or where the lover's music-murmuring spell
Calls some fair listener to her balcony :
Save where the nightingale's melodious sigh
In one sad strain pours his full heart away ;
And where Columbus on the silent sky
Gazes, communing with the stars' bright ray,
And feels his fame shall be quenchless and pure as they.

XXVII.

Above that solitary terrace-roof,
All legibly, their characters unroll
To his deep gaze the azure woven woof
Of immortality's emblazoned scroll.
He seemed to stand at that celestial goal,
And youth's prophetic visions congregate
Round manhood's stern sublimity of soul,
Deathlessly bright; the planet of his fate
To the unclouded zenith rose to culminate.

XXVIII.

Ye lone, mysterious watches of the night!
Who would exchange your spiritual hours
For all the gaudy palaces of light,
Curtained with sunbeams, garlanded with flowers?
The heart, within your unmolested bowers,
Moulds the chained universe to suit its will,
And rules o'er fate from fancy's airy towers.
Thus rapt he sat, till from the eastern hill
Man's stern taskmaster, day, beheld him sleepless still.

CANTO FIFTH.

THE ISLAND BRIDE.

CANTO FIFTH.

I.

ON the Alhambra's lofty outer wall
Is hung suspended, like a linnet's cage,
A trellised balcony, — whence over all
The town, from her voluptuous hermitage,
The Moorish maiden used to look ; — the sage,
To gaze aloof, in meditation deep,
Upon life's ever-toiling pilgrimage ;
Or, when the stars their silent vigils keep,
To muse on human hopes, while human passions sleep.

II.

It was a witching spot. By day the hum
From the glad city crept along the hill,
As when the restless ocean's voices come
To mountain pastures, fragrant, green, and still.
Far down, in sunshine, danced the singing rill,
Or slumbered in the deep, embowering shade
Which clustered round the battlements ; until
At length its unseen presence was betrayed
But by a deeper verdure in the open glade.

III.

And then at night, when slept care's vulture-brood,
And feverish pulses slackened into rest,
When nature in the weeds of widowhood
Had her unsleeping, faithful bosom drest,
The nightingale from out his dewy nest
Sung, as some maiden there his love had been,
 o near, his shadow fell upon her breast ;
And the moon, bathing in heaven's blue serene,
Flung her white vestments on the mountain's snowy screen.

IV.

That night, amid the highborn virgin band
Who formed the queen's unsullied coronal,
Culled from the fairest gardens of the land,
Upon one form all eyes observant fall, —
No step more proud within that lofty hall ;
Like the lithe willow by the breezes rocked,
Swam in the undulating dance her tall,
Imperial shape, — but haughty glances mocked,
While her red smiles bewitched, the knights who round her flocked

V.

And now that eve hath fallen upon earth,
And the day's gorgeous pageantry is done, —
Now when the evening's hours of festal mirth
Are past, and midnight's slumbers have begun, —
A maiden's noiseless, gliding footsteps shun
Her bower of rest, and seek that balcony.
Can this be she, — this dovelike, fluttering one, —
Just now so haughty 'mid her flatterers ? she,
Who to the garden's shades looks down so anxiously ?

VI.

O for some wizard's wonder-working wand,
Beneath whose touch the spirit should lay bare
The thousand aspirations, warm and fond,
Which lie in unformed, shadowy beauty there !
Its flower-buds, scorched by pride or crushed by care ;
The thoughts, with undeveloped grandeur rife,
Hid, like the sleeping lion in his lair ;
The passions, which, in amity or strife,
Weave in its close-locked halls the mystic dance of life.

VII.

'T were sweet to trace the crystal summer-dew,
Which from the pensive lids of twilight flows,
Through nature's transformations, till anew
It blushes in the petals of the rose ;
To track the vivifying soul which goes
Through life's blue channels unto woman's cheek,
On which its heaven-born effluence lives and glows,
And tells emotions words were all too weak
To utter, — sprites which lure, yet baffle, when we seek.

VIII.

He who hath roamed upon a tropic shore,
Where earth in rainbow-colored beauty glows,
Each hour more fair than that which went before,
And o'er gold sands time's crystal current flows
In melody along, — his spirit knows
How dearer far, when, at night's starry hour,
The cereus' vestal blossomings uncloze ;
Thus, in her white robe, she from out the tower
Into the moonlight stepped, and blossomed like a flower.

IX.

Nor long she waited there alone, ere he
For whom her bosom 'neath its gems was beating,
In bashful, trembling, fond expectancy,
From the dim garden answered to her greeting ;
And soon he climbed aloft, and was repeating,
On bended knee, soft words, which in love's mart,
When youth and hope to barter gifts are meeting,
Like yellow ingots, coined by fancy's art,
Buy with their airy dross the wealth of woman's heart.

X.

Alike, yet differing, they were : the maid
Was an hidalgo's daughter ; but the youth
Claimed no inheritance save his good blade,
His loyal bosom's hopefulness and truth,
And the queen's grace, — no trifling thing in sooth ;
But still the scornful, stony eyes of pride,
And envy, with her sidelong glance uncouth,
Had scoffed at love so seeming misallied :
Thus from the world they were constrained their love to hide.

XI.

Long time in whispered tones their accents blend,
Each told to each love's fond imaginings ;
And now the stolen conference must end :
“ Farewell ! ” he cried, “ each clasping fibre clings
Unto thy mated heart, but morning's wings
Will soon unfold ; perchance it is the last,
Last time I seek thy moonlight welcomings, —
Doubt's tottering bridge must soon or late be passed,
And fortune, life, and love upon one stake be cast.

XII.

“ I can no longer see thy favor sought
By all the courtiers round my mistress’s throne,
And know the gifts of adulation brought
By all my jealous heart would give alone ;
I cannot freeze to ice the burning tone,
Nor chain the pulses in each throbbing vein,
And with the world’s cold courtliness disown
The frenzy of despair within my brain,
When others press the hand my claims might never gain.

XIII.

“ Thou knowest him led by whose fostering hand
From palace-peopled Genoa I came,
And through whose favor in the royal band
I was adopted, with a page’s name ;
He, by his burning words and soul of flame,
Hath won the queen, with messages of peace,
An unfound empire’s loyalty to claim ;
As poets sing the hero of young Greece
Sailed o’er unbeaconed seas, to seek the golden fleece.

XIV.

“ To his I’ll link my fortunes ; in his train,
Through that lone sea’s unfurrowed waste I’ll go,
And with its ransacked riches come again,
On thee their bright effulgence to bestow ;
I’ll hang the emerald on thy neck of snow,
And twine with shining pearls thy braided hair,
And when again the summer roses blow,
I’ll bring the wealth, the honors, gathered there,
To thy stern father’s feet, to aid a lover’s prayer.

XV.

“I would not seek thy promised hand by stealth,
And drag thee down to poverty and scorn,
Or climb, by thy hereditary wealth,
To the bright eminence thy charms adorn ;
With equal step I ’d come, as equal born,
Or claim it as a conqueror’s reward,
From the unwilling grasp of fortune torn.
O, countless crushed affections have deplored
Gifts, in the world’s cold creed, by them all unrestored !

XVI.

“I cannot bear the soft, inglorious ease
Of my oft-envied lot. My temples flush,
When some mailed knight my silken fetters sees,
With his proud smile of scorn ; — that burning blush,
The spirit’s wounds from which the life-drops gush,
Beneath a warrior’s panoply I ’d hide,
And tame in strife the impulses which rush
In madness through my brain ; this boiling tide
Of youth cannot as yet in dull contentment glide.

XVII.

“Now in the land is left no warrior spoil,
Since the proud Moor swears fealty to Spain ;
The hind, all unmolested in his toil,
Roots the green laurel from his harvest-plain ;
Beyond the sea there may perchance remain
Some yet ungathered leaves ; nor need’st thou fear
To lose affection’s undivided reign ;
 hough the bark drift as winds and currents veer,
The steadfast cable holds, — my heart is anchored here.”

XVIII.

She listened as beneath a wizard's spell,
Still as a statue on a monument ;
But the fast tears from her white eyelids fell,
And her quick-varying color came and went ;
And thronging thoughts, — her lover's banishment, —
Her lonely yearnings, — the dread ocean-storm, —
Her hopes, — his glory, — her stern sire's consent, —
Breathed breathless, as if through some marble form
A prisoned spirit poured its pulses thick and warm.

XIX.

But the benumbed soul stirred itself ; she spoke,
And her concentrated tones upon the air
Fell, like lone midnight's ghostly dial-stroke,
That calls the viewless spirits from their lair.
“ And must we part ? Can I, alas ! not share
Thy dangers, as thy glories are for me ?
O, all-unshrinkingly this heart would dare
To track the desert, the mysterious sea !
Death, solitude, despair, were powerless with thee.

XX.

“ But be it so ! — I know such words are vain ;
'T is but the drowning wretch's frenzied clutch
At some bright bubble ; — nor would I retain
Thee from thy high endeavour ; 'neath love's touch,
My weakness shall turn adamant. How much
Nobler the heart which hopes than that which grieves !
Woman's ambitious helplessness is such
As is the climbing vine-bough's, that receives
From some tall tree a prop, where to unfold its leaves.

XXI.

“Such hast thou been to me ; — round my young head
There clustered not the tender charities
Which their soft-flushing petals ever spread
In the meek sunshine of a mother’s eyes ;
No sister listened to my childish sighs,
Or girlhood’s gushing confidence ; — I dwelt
Alone, and taught my bosom to disguise,
Not stifle, the emotions which it felt,
And the heart’s hidden lore remained, as yet, unspelt.

XXII.

“At length thy presence taught it me. How well
Do I recall the day you came to bring
My truant falcon from the distant dell,
Where he was resting his untutored wing !
And as acquaintance grew, to my chill spring
Succeeded glorious summer. One by one,
I felt each thought to thine more closely cling ;
And then love’s fount, which, darkly hid, had run
Deep in the earth, burst forth and sparkled in the sun.

XXIII.

“And then how oft amid the festal throng
I’ve inly smiled to catch thy jealous glance,
When we met coldly as I swept along,
Threading the tangled mazes of the dance ;
To my deep-brooding heart it did enhance
My wilful happiness, that thou shouldst see
My playful greeting of each knight’s advance, —
Then, in these hours of stolen privacy,
Clad in their praises, come, all tenderness, to thee.

XXIV.

“But go thou forth; — I feel it is thy lot
To seize the gifts blind fortune hath refused.
Nor shall I be forsaken. On this spot
Where we to-night so tenderly have mused,
Thy soul shall be my comrade; and, infused
In the still ray when silent planets shine,
My spirit shall be with thee, as it used
In the dear hours by fancy made divine,
And my, according step keep equal pace with thine.”

XXV.

At first her lip had quivered; but at length
Her girlish form dilated, and her eye
Grew dazzling with the spirit's steadfast strength;
She raised her broad, white forehead to the sky,
As if her lover's star-writ destiny
Were legible in its blue depths; — her breast,
Heaving like ocean's when the storm 's gone by,
Grew calm in confidence; for she possessed
The talisman of faith to still its waves to rest.

XXVI.

She dreamed not of forgetfulness. Her soul
Was as a part of his, — like kneaded clay
Formed by the sculptor to a perfect whole;
Or as the sunbeam's iris-colored ray
Melts to the white effulgency of day; —
Space could not part them; and her woman-pride,
Whose nature tracks, in love, ambition's way,
And clasps the eagle; through the storm to ride,
Went hand in hand with his, careless of aught beside.

XXVII.

'T was woman's heart, — that gentle paradox, —
Yielding, yet all unshaken in its trust ;
Proud, yet with steadfast constancy that mocks
At treason, though the heavy fetters' rust
Corrode the heart, and tyrants prove unjust ;
Lending to idols attributes above
Our nature, and still clinging to the dust
Which crumbleth by it ; like the lonely dove,
Faithful to one instinctive, simple creed, — to love.

XXVIII.

But when the moment came that they must sever,
And his last, lingering farewell met her ear,
Her spirit faltered in its high endeavour
And melted into tenderness and fear.
She listens, once again that voice to hear, —
Once more to catch its gently whispered tone ;
But not a footfall stirs the atmosphere.
With cheek as cold, against the chilly stone
She leant. Earth seemed how dark ! and she, O, how alone !

XXIX.

O love, and youth, and passion ! ye who spread
Your rainbow-colored raiment upon earth !
How soon your fleeting phantoms perish ! — dead,
With the first kiss ; consummate in their birth !
Yet every hour of your brief life is worth
Whole centuries by cloudy care o'ercast ;
When the heart mourns the withered feelings' dearth,
And age, as spendthriftlike we wake at last,
Grasps in his miser-hands the relics of the past.

XXX.

We trample down life's flowers ; — we all-forget
To keep alive your vestal temple-light,
Until, too late, when your white star hath set,
Shivering, we grope in memory's moonless night,
And stretch blind arms, which ne'er may reunite
The severed ties of youth ; — or, false and vain,
Your lightning-flashes guide not, but affright ;
Or in hearts bound in custom's martyr chain
Your smouldering fires consume, till naught but dust remain.

XXXI.

Pour, then, thy tears, sad maiden, ere thou know
How better far love's blissful agony
Is than life's barren garmenture of snow ;
Ere the warm, fleeting hues of morning die,
And the sick sun toil palely through the sky ;
Ere in distrust and doubt experience steep
Thy virgin spirit, and thy soul doth lie,
Weary with watching, unrefreshed by sleep,
And praying, all in vain, for the sad boon — to weep.

CANTO SIXTH.

THE ISLAND BRIDE.

CANTO SIXTH.

I.

MORNING upon the mountains. From their tops
Roll the soft clouds in amber-colored bands,
And on their summits, in the crystal drops
Bathing her snowy feet, the goddess stands;
O'er earth's pale cheek her glowing gaze expands,
And her red lips kiss back the blushes there;
Fresh flowers she bringeth in her rosy hands,
And, from her ivory shoulders, on the air
Float the dishevelled tresses of her sunny hair.

II.

Morning within the city. Her cool breath
To want's lethargic-slumbering retreat
Cometh, like resurrection unto death,
To call its inmates to the busy street.
The early husbandman, with dusty feet,
Beareth his dewy fruit from door to door;
In the thronged market-place the townsmen meet,
Or, kneeling on the minster's marble floor,
Crave grace for sins, next day to be rehearsed once more.

III.

Morning upon the ocean. Like the motes
Which hang suspended in day's yellow beam,
With tiny sails, the flocks of fisher-boats
Put from the shore, and glimmer on the stream ;
Upon the waves the moon's reflected gleam,
Scattered at night like pearls, all white and cold,
Fades, as the misty memory of a dream,
And with a monarch's step, majestic, bold,
Treads the triumphant sun o'er tapestries of gold.

IV.

In a small seaport, at that morning hour,
The congregated population crowd
To where the bell from the gray convent-tower
Utters its vibratory voice aloud.
Within, proud manly forms in prayer are bowed,
And to the holy priest their sins confess ;
That, when their deep contrition they have vowed,
His absolution may their spirits bless,
And send them, with white hands, to ocean's wilderness.

V.

Strengthened and calm, they leave that solemn rite,
The incense through the breathless air ascending,
Where seraph faces shed their gentle light
And the deep organ-tones with prayer are blending.
And now they issue forth, the crowd attending,
Where their scant squadron's sea-worn vessels ride, —
The cannon's voice, men's shouts, the heavens rending, —
And many a maiden's pensive glances eyed
Alphonso's graceful mien at his stern chieftain's side.

VI.

The signal ! lo, the free flag climbs aloft ;
With flowing sails they skim the plashing wave ; —
Farewell to those that prayed and those who scoffed ;
Farewell, gay town, green fields, and mountain-cave.
In silent groups, the most unthoughtful grave,
With wistful, homeward eyes, the sailors stand.
The blue hills sink, the bluer billows pave
Their path, — the salt breeze hath no scent of land ;
Home is behind, — before, wide, weary wastes expand.

VII.

Glad is the heart upon the bounding seas,
When the white furrows track their crystal plain,
And to the brain a thousand memories
Of gently whispering pine-boughs come again,
While the full clouds of snowy canvass strain
Towards youthful haunts we soon shall see once more ; —
But they, O, how could they their souls constrain,
When each morn lit a desert as before,
And in day's parting beam there shone no glimpse of shore ?

VIII.

Hours became days ; days, weeks ; weeks, months ; but still,
Throughout their dreary ocean-banishment,
They bowed to his unconquerable will.
But many a moody glance was homeward sent,
And died at length the sailors' merriment ;
Till, day by day, dissatisfaction grew,
In deeply muttered accents finding vent,
Until the boldest of the chafing crew
Trampled in their revolt those who would fain stand true.

IX.

“How long shall we this lonely track pursue
Unto your still receding paradise?
How long, like willing dastards, bend to you,
A stranger, for a visionary prize?
Think you our homes are nothing in our eyes?
Lo! famine, with her maniac eyeballs stern,
Shall from the monster-peopled deep arise;
The compass fails, no starry beacons burn;
Choose your own lot, — with or without you, we return.”

X.

Earth hath no torture for the soaring mind
Greater than, when the precipice is scaled,
Its airy blossomings must be resigned,
And all, for one last step, hath naught availed;
Yet, even by that mutiny assailed,
His spirit quailed not, though his nerveless hands
Fell quivering by his side, and his cheek paled;
But his eye kindled like the forge's brands,
And with calm lip he spoke his pleadings and commands.

XI.

Alphonso stood beside him, — still and brave,
Ready his chieftain's destiny to share;
He brought the standard Isabella gave,
And flung its blazoned folds upon the air;
Columbus took it, and with inward prayer,
Lifting his ardent glances to the sky,
Invoked the blessed emblem pictured there,
And not in vain; his faith, his purpose high,
Rose up like angel-guards in his extremity.

XII.

“ Lower down the boat,” he cried, — the men obeyed, —
“ Give me a pittance of the meanest food,
And be there one firm heart, one loyal blade,
Let them be with me in my solitude ;
I ’ve sworn this flag, once wet in paynim blood,
Should over India’s ransomed millions wave,
And my soul changeth not its steadfast mood.
No half-withheld, unknighly aid I crave ;
Alone, I ’ll go to seek an empire or a grave.

XIII.

“ But will ye falter, now ye almost clasp
Your labor’s fruit, your constancy’s reward, —
Now that ye hold an empire in your grasp,
Without a title-deed save your good sword ?
Is ’t I, a stranger, who am thus abhorred ?
Your fame shall not be less ; your race shall hold
Sway o’er the wealth of each barbaric horde ; —
Or, should that promised land prove poor and cold,
Our queen hath gratitude ; Spain lacketh not for gold.”

XIV.

Amid the selfish struggles of the world,
Where the cold sneer and envy’s traitor-dart
Are at each nobler exiled virtue hurled
In fame’s arena, traffic’s toiling mart,
Some starry impulses will still impart
Their light to eyes through grovelling eyelids blind,
Rousing the slumbering warders of the heart,
Quickening the kernel in its stony rind,
Till pulse, eye, thought, resolve, attest our kindred kind.

XV.

They wavered, waiting for some kindling word
Whose tone might quell the rebel bands of doubt ;
And then Alphonso's voice the silence stirred,
Putting those cringing, faithless foes to rout : —
“ I 'll not return to hear the rabble flout ;
I follow by my chieftain's lonely side.”
His fickle followers answer with a shout,
“ We, too, will in our loyalty abide ;
Till the third sun hath set, our course shall still be tried.”

XVI.

Onward, still onward, o'er a placid sea, —
The dolphins flashing through its crystal screen,
The unveering eastern breezes fresh and free,
And the cerulean heavens all-serene, —
And now the land-bird's truant wing is seen ;
A freshly broken branch of budding willow
Garlands the hoary wave with tender green ;
And, beckoning from its undulating pillow,
A human form floats past, on the dark-heaving billow.

XVII.

Through the lone midnight watch Columbus stood,
All its roused feelings struggling in his soul,
And through the darkness, o'er the formless flood,
His restless eye still sought the spirit's goal.
And certainty on hope's swift footsteps stole
Through the slow-waning night, until the day
Painted with glowing tints creation's scroll ;
When, glimmering in its first reflected ray,
The virgin, blushing land in unveiled beauty lay.

XVIII.

I will not paint the now repentant crew,
Crowding their leader's clemency to claim, —
The rapt enthusiasm of the few,
Glad in their long-anticipated fame, —
The Indian's terror at the cannon's flame,
His adoration of the stranger guest, —
The faltering step with which the matron came,
With her scared infant clinging to her breast,
To yield to foreign hands the Eden they possessed.

XIX.

With big, round eyes, the wondering children creep,
Bringing fresh fruit, to clasp the strangers' knees ;
While more remote the tawny maidens peep,
Like startled fawns, from the thick cocoa-trees.
In mute astonishment, the savage sees
An altar rise, and hears the anthem's strain ;
Strange incense overloads the scented breeze,
And the bright cross, erected on the plain,
Claims the broad, fertile land for Christendom and Spain.

XX.

'T were a sad, thankless office to relate
The Spaniard's influence on that peaceful land,
Until all-tenantless and desolate
The captive Indians' palm-thatched cabins stand ;
How the invader, with a greedy hand,
Tore from their trembling grasp its shining store,
And with the scourge enforced his harsh command,
Bidding them mine the mountain's golden core,
And to a dungeon's roof changed that fair, sunny shore.

XXI.

We will not ask how 't was Columbus felt,
To hear captivity's imploring groan ;
His century, the country where he dwelt,
Took little heed of slavery's sad moan.
Enough that long-sought empire was his own ;
His ship must track its scarcely faded wake,
And bear its tributes to his mistress' throne ;
And he must leave those beings, for whose sake
That queen had sent him, at her name to blench and quake.

XXII.

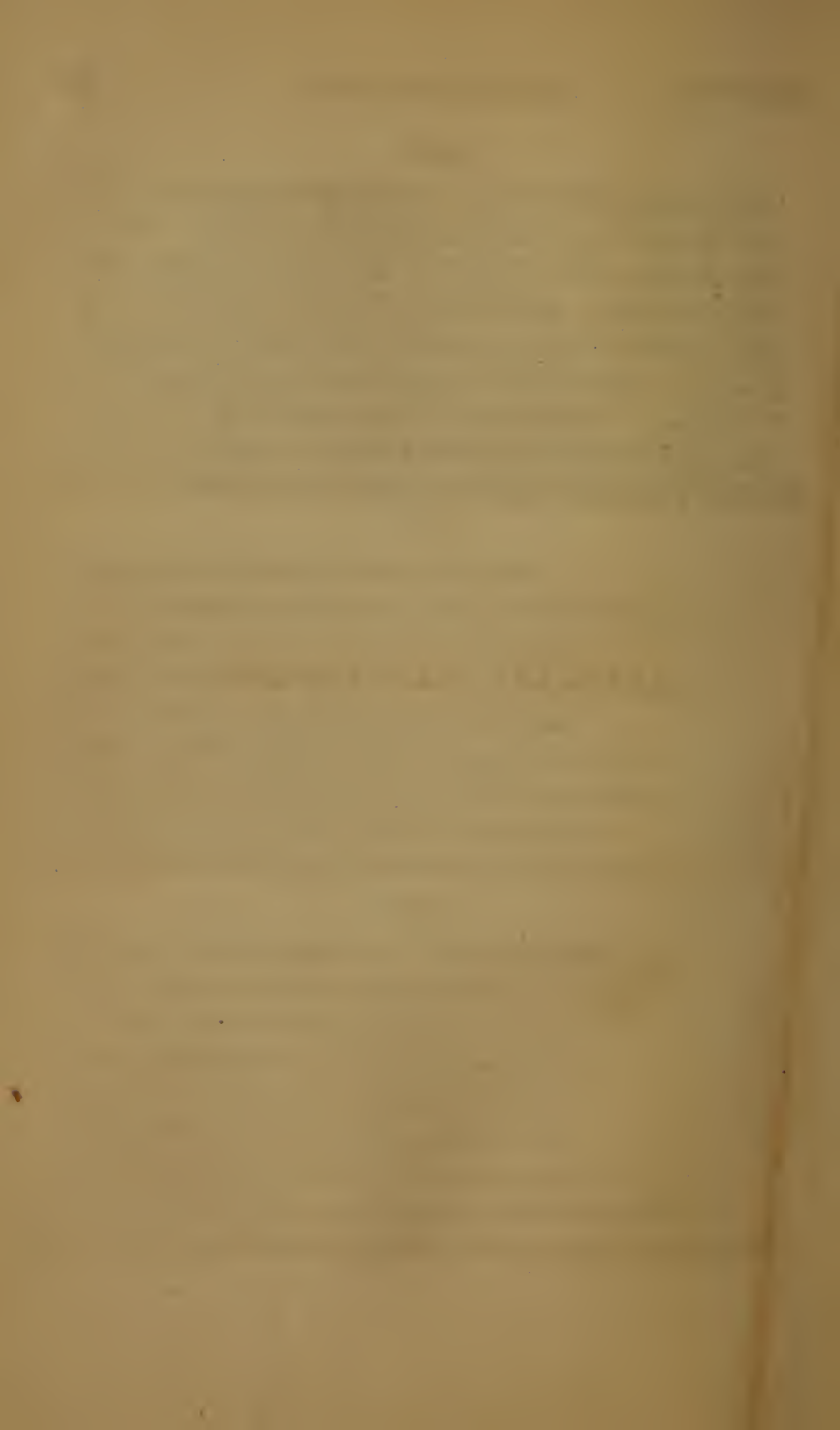
And must civilization's onward path,
Which should be like an angel's, — all of light, —
Be as some demon-minister's of wrath,
And her hot breath earth's dewy flowerets blight ?
Must nestling happiness be put to flight,
And confidence grow fear, and, goaded, swell
To wrath's chafed stream of ineffectual might ?
Must the heart wither 'neath its iron spell,
And, where a paradise was found, be left a hell ?

XXIII.

No joy at that departure. The hard chain
Eats closer to the fibre than before ;
An iron-hearted colony remain
In stern possession of the trampled shore.
And there Alphonso stayeth, to explore
The treasures of that golden-fruited soil,
Until Columbus should return once more, —
When he to Spain would bear his garnered spoil,
And love, fame, honors, wealth, should recompense his toil.

XXIV.

The canvass is unfurled, — the anchor weighed ;
Off ! ere the land-breeze in the sun wax faint ;
The parting cup is quaffed, — last words are said ;
Not all-unheard, perchance, the Indian's plaint, —
But on those whispering waves, what doubt could taint
Feelings which felt that zephyr's freshening force ?
“ Farewell ! commend us to our patron saint.”
Homeward the vessel speeds her easy course ;
Ambition's trumpet tones drown pity and remorse.



CANTO SEVENTH.

STATE OF NEW YORK

IN SENATE,

JANUARY 1, 1891.

REPORT

OF

THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE,

IN ANSWER TO A RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE SENATE,

PASSED MAY 1, 1889,

AND BY THE ASSEMBLY,

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THE ISLAND BRIDE.

CANTO SEVENTH.

I.

LAND of the tropic ! climate of the sun !
Where plenty pours from her exhaustless horn
Gifts, by no bitter sweat of labor won,
Nor from the churlish grasp of nature torn, —
With every sand of every hour is born
Fresh beauty to thy all-prolific earth ;
In each star-peopled night, full day, and tender morn,
Some elemental glory hath its birth,
Winning sad hearts to joy, unthoughtful ones to mirth.

II.

I tread thy soil, — I feel thy incense blend
With the soft breath of the expiring hours ;
I see thy setting sun his radiance send,
Like prisoned monarch, from his cloud-built towers, —
And the thick planets, like celestial flowers,
Blossom in the blue firmament, and there
People with thoughts of heaven those heavenly bowers ;
To night's cool kiss my throbbing brow I bare,
And morning's breezes bathe my moist, uplifted hair.

III.

Around my steps the jasmine doth unfold
Its snowy petals ; in the forest-shades
The orange hangs its clustering orbs of gold ;
O'er the savanna and the open glades
The rustling cane-leaves spread their glossy blades ;
The moon, as through some marble fane, from high,
Glimmers amid the palm-trees' colonnades,
And in the quiet of the noontide sky,
Their tall, lithe stems stand swaying silently.

IV.

Well wast thou fitted for the gentle race
Whose woven cabins dotted o'er the plain, —
Who found the woods sufficient dwelling-place,
And o'er thy soil held unmolested reign, —
To whom the forest was a holy fane,
And earth an altar, whose glad incense went,
With man's glad thoughts, to heaven. Beneath no chain
Was the wild freedom of their footsteps bent ;
Slavery had not ordained her black disfigurement.

V.

Why must it be so ? Answer, ye who tread
The climes where luxury is toil's reward, —
Where man must fight the tempest for his bread,
Not pluck it from earth's still-replenished hoard.
Ye come, but joy not in pleasures stored
In her broad granary, but ye would fain
Join all the gifts each differing zone hath poured ;
Here, though, the Saxon cannot toil, — in vain
His unnerved hand would break thy soft, Circean chain.

VI.

The lesson was a brief one. Day by day,
And drop by drop, the bitter cup was filled,
Until the goblet turned to crumbling clay,
And in a shower of blood its contents spilled.
It had been all in vain Alphonso willed
More gentle treatment ; — mercy melts like snow,
When avarice' yellow fires its paleness gild.
But the crushed worm became a serpent foe.
Weak tyrants ! knew ye not, men gather as they sow ?

VII.

When the enamoured midnight-breeze was drinking
The dew-drops from the woodbine's floating hair,
And the late Pleiades to rest were sinking,
In the lone thicket shone a crimson glare.
What do those dusky demon figures there ?
What means that muttered compact wild and stern ?
What booty shall those leagued assassins share ?
'T is with revenge their goaded bosoms burn ;
Their foes shall know what wages lust and avarice earn.

VIII.

They met in secret, and they part by stealth ;
To-morrow's eve shall light the avenging flame,
To-morrow give again their plundered wealth,
And the red blood atone their daughters' shame.
To-morrow the invader's hated name
Shall be a thing that was, and they shall brood
No longer on their wrongs, subdued and tame.
Their fatal darts with venom are imbued ;
The oath is sworn, — leaves rustle, — all is solitude.

IX.

But no ! a graceful girlish form is creeping
Where the low, sheltering boughs in darkness wave.
Her pulses throb, her eye is wet with weeping,
But her firm heart Alphonso's life shall save,
Or die for one whose gentle nature gave
Soft looks, when all around did darkly lower.
Passion, devotion, in those climates, crave
No sickly culture ; in one glowing hour
The bursting bud expands, and lo ! love's fadeless flower !

X.

Now, like a Titan waking from his sleep,
Up the piled mountain-clouds to heaven to climb,
The summer sun, emerging from the deep,
Trod to the zenith, — lonely and sublime.
Careless alike of innocence and crime,
He pours on all his broad, impartial ray ;
But when he sinks in mellow evening time,
Upon far other scenes his beams shall play,
And they who hailed his birth be dead ere close of day.

XI.

With haggard eye, as one of mind bereft,
Mahala tracked his shadows o'er the plain ;
There was no hopeless hope of mercy left ;
A thousand tortures rack her aching brain, —
But though her sheltering bosom's shield be vain,
She still could die with him, so nobly fair ;
Could she no clemency, no respite, gain,
'T were sweet to cling in clasping fondness there,
And, if she might not save, his destiny to share.

XII.

But a quick thought brings rapture to her grief ;
Despair was changed to energy ; — she twined
A basket from the palm-tree's glossy leaf,
Placed there what hoarded ingots she could find,
Beneath fresh flowers and the bright citron's rind, —
Then, with a throbbing cheek and drooping lid,
She sought Alphonso, in the shade reclined,
And, with her broken words and gestures, bid
Him follow to the mine where that red wealth was hid.

XIII.

He tracks the footsteps of that loving maiden,
Among the tall primeval forest-trees ;
'Mid shrubs, with flowers and early dew-drops laden,
Which yield their wealth to every rifling breeze ;
Through mountain streamlets, gurgling round their knees,
And dells, where the old hills were rent asunder,
Whose sheltered depths the sunbeam never sees ;
O'er cliffs, with sunless ocean-caverns under,
Shook by the sullen wave's reverberating thunder.

XIV.

Upon the undulating hills which lie
Behind the hamlet's busy neighbourhood,
With conelike summit piercing to the sky
Through its white zone of clouds, a mountain stood.
Around its base, in hoary solitude,
Unbroken by the sound of human speech,
The forests dip their branches in the flood
From the gray rocks ; — or in a lengthened reach,
The whispering billows die along the silvery beach.

XV.

He followed up its sides his gentle guide
To a still grotto, curtained o'er with green,
Whence one might gaze below, all unespied,
Like the lone eagle through the leafy screen.
He looks ; — O God ! the horrors of that scene !
Where Carnage treads the devastated glen,
And woman, his red harvestings to glean,
Follows, — as when the tigress from her den
Leads forth her thirsting whelps, to taste the blood of men.

XVI.

There, one, alone, hemmed in by numbers, clasps —
Like the fierce boar at bay — his broken lance ;
Another, weltering in his life-blood, grasps
His gold in death's still-palpitating trance.
There was the hoarse, stern oath, — the blazing glance ;
Until, with palsied arm, and reeking knife,
Despair became too dark for utterance,
And in mute fury, gasping in the strife,
With one last shivering sob, each yielded up his life.

XVII.

Alphonso, shuddering, appalled, amazed, —
His hand, unconscious, clutching at his steel, —
Upon those gory saturnalia gazed,
Which bid each curdling drop to ice congeal.
But vain had been one champion's frantic zeal
Against those thirsty thousands ; — on the ground
He sank, with an unsyllabled appeal
To heaven, till tranquil o'er that crimson ground
The moon's white footsteps trod, and midnight reigned profound.

XVIII.

And she, that gentle maiden, at his side
Knelt, trembling like the aspen on its stem,
Yet glorying, with her nature's artless pride,
In her successful, loving stratagem ;
Some natural pity, too, she felt for them
Who bled below ; — but they, with ruthless hand,
Had plucked off pity's pearly diadem,
And meek compassion's silver girdle-band ; —
How could she weep for them, the spoilers of her land ?

XIX.

Morn came and went, — another and another ;
No trace remained of where, in blood, had been
Man's retribution from his trampled brother,
Save, on the silent plain, a deeper green ;
Or where, perchance, amid the grass were seen
Some scattered bones, — ghastly and glittering white ;
And the vexed Indian's heart, again serene,
Sank into slumber with the cloudless night,
And woke again to joy with day's reviving light.

XX.

Alphonso sojourned in his hermitage,
Amid the strife forgotten or unsought,
Until her kindred's transitory rage
Had been appeased ; — and there Mahala brought
The simple viands of her land, — unbought,
But by the easy toil which serves to bring
Variety to life unstirred by thought,
Where autumn's fruits blend with the buds of spring,
And time, all-shadowless, flits by on noiseless wing.

XXI.

Who had not felt that land's omnipotence
O'er all the ever-gnawing brood of care, —
Bringing to each intoxicated sense
Fresh tribute-gifts from ocean, earth, and air ;
Where nature, all-ungrudgingly, doth share
Her bounties to all comers, who may strive,
Vainly, to drain the bright enchantments there ?
Blest in her bounties, had she naught to give
But the one single, all-sufficient boon, — to live.

XXII.

Its fetters grew upon him, as the vine
Flingeth its verdant, purple-laden yoke —
Whose clinging tendrils noiselessly entwine —
Around the shrouded sternness of the oak.
The sweet, transcendent stillness was unbroke
By the cold world's harsh sneer or life's turmoil ;
From unmolested slumber he awoke
To search the forest for its ripened spoil,
Or, in the dreamy shade, pursue some gentle toil.

XXIII.

Mahala in his presence ever kept ;
Her bounding steps his wandering feet attended,
She watched o'er him at noontide when he slept,
And in her happy dreams his image blended.
When the sun's feet his golden stairs ascended,
She hung their cave with many a tropic flower ;
And when day's long, unbroken reign was ended,
She still was with him in that marriage-bower, —
Nature their only priest, and modesty her dower.

XXIV.

And thus Alphonso and Mahala wed.
Life was like nature, all in blossoms drest ;
And passion, from her urn exhaustless, shed
Fresh gifts upon her climate's stranger-guest :
And many a sport was theirs ; — upon the crest
Of morning's billow, cradled there, they lay,
And crept, at noon, like wood-birds to their nest ;
Where the half-slumbering sea-breeze, tired of play,
Folded his dewy wings through the long, sultry day.

XXV.

And she, all-blissful in her fond devotion,
Carolled in spirit like the soaring lark ;
Impetuous, artless, gentle, all emotion,
It was her being's paradise to mark
His features — as the Hebrew maid the ark
Where dwelt her God — with love no doubt could mar.
Glittering in gladness, as the fire-fly's spark,
Her eye played round him near, — and when afar
Beaconed his coming steps, like Hero's love-lit star.

XXVI.

And thus Alphonso and Mahala wed.
She for unchanged eternity ; but he
Felt passion's airy fetters turn to lead,
And that voluptuous summer-dream to be
Not slumber, but the spirit's lethargy.
He yearned once more to hear his kindred tongue,
Once more his kindred's lineaments to see ;
Ambition's myriad seeds to vigor sprung ; —
Let the worn heart seek rest, — it is not for the young.

XXVII.

Except, perchance, where comes some lovesick boy
To forest-cloisters, — an untonsured monk,—
To revel in imaginary joy,
With passion's purple-clustering juices drunk.
But through the growing oak's vine-shrouded trunk,
And manhood's brain, pillowed in luxury's lap,
Until it hath in time's inertness sunk,
Pours the warm life-blood and the circling sap,
And struggles into growth through every rifted gap.

XXVIII.

And she, Leona, that confiding one,
Who told with mighty prayers love's rosary,
Counting with paler cheek each added sun,
Mingling his thought with heaven's on bended knee, —
She, whose proud spirit bore him company,
Or led the way, upon ambition's stream, —
She haunted all the halls of memory ;
Her white robe through the pillared woods would gleam,
And her still, saintly presence peopled midnight's dream.

XXIX.

Month followed month, — and daily more and more
Flushed the bright fever on his sunken cheek ;
Moody he roams the solitary shore,
Or gazes, wistful, from the mountain-peak ;
When, lo ! emerging like a glimmering streak
Of sunshine on the ocean-cradled cloud,
The absent ship returns, fresh spoil to seek.
She nears, — she anchors, — sullenly and proud
She rides the vassal waves. Land-sick, to shore they crowd.

XXX.

They hear the story of their comrades' woes,
They swear revenge, — they tell to him, in turn,
Columbus' triumph o'er his silenced foes,
And honors wait Alphonso's quick return.
Again the fires of avarice shall burn, —
Once more the Indian writhe in hopeless pain ;
Again his toiling, fainting soul shall learn
The rigor of a taskmaster, — again
Lust, avarice, cruelty have riveted his chain.

XXXI.

He goes ; — upon the beach Mahala stands,
In self-forgetfulness no longer shy ;
Her heaving chest, wild gaze, and quivering hands
Express her bosom's speechless agony.
Far as her straining vision can descry,
She tracks his fading sail with glazing look ;
Then, with one shriek, to which the hills reply,
Flies to their cavern's desolated nook, —
An island Ariadne, wretched and forsook.

XXXII.

Hath earth no retribution for her sorrows ? Hark !
The tropic tempest riseth from his lair,
Awakes his slumbering legions, fierce and dark,
And flings his coal-black mane upon the air ;
Beneath his tread, the trembling hills lay bare
Their forest-covered breasts, — the rifted rocks
Lie shivered by his lightning-weapons there ;
The fountains swell to floods, — the whirlwind mocks
The trembling earth, that quakes with the mad thunder's shocks.

XXXIII.

And she! — O, well the elements expressed,
With the fierce rapture of their fearful fray,
The storm of anguish battling in her breast,
And sweeping its humanity away!
Amid the crashing trees her footsteps stray,
Unconscious of the tempest's dread alarms,
To a bare cliff drenched by the ocean spray;
There, 'mid her pangs, a wakening being warms
Her thrilling heart, — she clasps an infant in her arms.

XXXIV.

One long, absorbing gaze of rapture spoke
A mother's welcome, — then upon her brain
Its added weight of desolation broke;
That it which close beneath her heart had lain, —
That heart whose throbbings through each tiny vein
Had sent an equal pulse, — that it should know
The torture of her sorrows' galling chain!
Earth had no refuge for that weary woe;
Ere its lip drained her breast, she plunged; — they slept below.

XXXV.

And where was he, the father of that child,
His offspring and his victim? — O'er the side
Of the still-plashing vessel gazing, he beguiled
Memory, who tracked him with avenging stride,
By hope's bright-painted shapes of love and pride:
“She'll soon forget the pain our parting brought; —
Some Indian youth will win her for his bride; —
Her love was showered upon me all-unsought”; —
Yet still her clinging look was graven on his thought.

XXXVI.

But, lo ! the storm, along its ocean path,
Maketh each wave a crystal precipice.
“ Furl, furl the canvass, ere its sudden wrath
Be on our heads ! ” — Too late ! — the billows hiss,
Peopling like hoary-crested serpents the abyss,
And howl and coil upon the hungry tide.
Seared by the lightning’s devastating kiss,
The splintered mast comes crashing down the side,
And landward on the wave all-rudderless they ride.

XXXVII.

Brief fury ! The tornado hurries past,
On its black, cloudy wings, in fearful flight,
And the unvexèd ocean sinketh fast,
A mirror for the evening’s glowing light.
As if the sun had broken in his might
To where earth’s hidden ruby-caverns lie,
He pours his radiant glories on the sight
Through stalactites of mist, — till sea and sky
Mingle and blend in one all-glorious unity.

XXXVIII.

But on the wrinkled earth man’s eye may catch
The traces where its fiery footsteps went.
The giant oak, the flakes of cabin-thatch,
Are both, like cobwebs, by the whirlwind rent.
Silent is nature’s voice of merriment ;
Rank upon rank, — as in a warrior-grave, —
The prostrate monarchs of the woods are blent,
Save where some solitary palm’s torn feathers wave,
Grieving, like champion-knight, o’er those he might not save.

XXXIX.

The shipwrecked ones return, to seek repair
For their torn vessel ; — crowding to the shore,
The landsmen lend a comrade's active care
To those who gladly greet that land once more.
What is Alphonso wildly kneeling o'er,
And clasping with a miser's trembling hand ?
What hath the ocean yielded from its store ?
There, wafted by the sobbing breeze to land,
Mahala and her infant weltered on the strand.

CANTO EIGHTH.

THE ISLAND BRIDE.

CANTO EIGHTH.

I.

ONCE more in Spain. The sun's meridian light
On the far-undulating landscape falls,
And in his yellow radiance, gleaming white,
Shine the proud palace-shafts and capitals.
Amid the clustering trees, its marble walls
Look proudly out in a majestic mass ;
Like crystal willows, waving waterfalls
Shed their bright tear-drops on the grateful grass,
Lending eve's dewy breath, where noon's hot breezes pass.

II.

Enter with me this lofty pillared room,
Where, through tall windows and the open door,
A screen of vine-leaves sheds a tender gloom,
And flings its flickering shadows on the floor.
The walls are glowing with their pictured store,
And rich with carvings exquisitely quaint,
From out whose framework living glances pour,
Such as Velasquez and Murillo paint, —
Stern hero, — laughing boy, — and rapt, ecstatic saint.

III.

A lady sits within that hall alone,
Her broidery fallen from her claspèd hands, —
Heedless that all its splendors are her own,
That she is heir to those ancestral lands ;
Unmarked the statue-studded forest stands,
Through whose tall trunks far-stretching landscapes gleam ;
'T is naught to her that there her will commands ;
To her unresting gaze those glories seem
But as the scenery of some unquiet dream.

IV.

She starts, — she treads the tessellated tile ;
She listens, — heaves a disappointed sigh ;
She strives the lagging moments to beguile
With fragments of some chanted minstrelsy ;
In vain, the unfinished notes in silence die.
She marks the dial-shade : — “ Why comes he not ?
How tardily time’s leaden pinions fly !
O, without him, cherished and unforgot,
This fair inheritance were but a desert spot ! ”

V.

It was Leona’s voice, — ’t was she who stood,
Clad in her just-maturing beauty, there ;
'T was she, who in that gorgeous solitude
Breathed, with impatient lip, love’s ardent prayer.
Alphonso had returned, — but must repair
First with due homage to his sovereign’s feet,
For the bright guerdons of her fostering care,
Ere, with joy made by absence doubly sweet,
He come, — her hero-love, — his faithful one to greet.

VI.

He comes at length, — 't is he ! — but is it so ?
Can this be he, 'her trusting bosom's lord,
Robed in a pilgrim's sullen garb of woe ?
Where are his floating plumes, his jewelled sword,
His golden, knightly spurs, — the queen's reward ?
Where is his radiant eye's effulgent light,
Through whose soft glance his loving spirit poured ?
Where is his stately step of conscious might,
And the warm smile to speak the rapture of delight ?

VII.

But yes, 't is he ! — O, lover's eyes are keen ! —
His aspect melted down her maiden pride ;
Affection reigned where bashfulness had been : —
“ Alphonso ! it is I ! it is thy bride !
It matters not that fortune have denied
Her fickle smiles ; — this bosom is a mine
Where gems of purer ray than hers abide.
I am the last, the loneliest of my line ;
Their gathered wealth thou seest around ; 't is ours, — 't is thine.”

VIII.

Alas, the crumbling clay that love had moulded !
One glance of rapture from his eyelids beamed ;
Once in his arms her gentle form he folded,
And felt a bliss which love had never dreamed :
But recollection on his rapture gleamed ; —
As if from off a skeleton there fell
The fleshly robes of life, that vision seemed.
His haggard eye, his throbbing pulses, tell
More of his grief than words, whose tones were like a knell.

IX.

“ Leona ! ’t is not that ; — I might have brought
Uncounted gems and riches to thy feet ;
But of those rainbow-colored gifts of nature, naught
Were from this spotted hand an offering meet ;
I might have come as princes come to greet
Their brides, — with star, and plume, and knightly crest ;
Thus at the courtiers’ board I ’ve had my seat ;
But ill that garb my blackened heart expressed ;
Could they have looked on it, these weeds had fitted best.

X.

“ Methought I had a dream. I saw a boy
Playing upon a flowery meadow-side ;
In the glad mirthfulness of childhood’s joy,
He launched his tiny squadrons in their pride,
And, as he saw the mimic vessels glide,
Hailed them with ringing laughter from the brink ;
Then bent his red lip o’er the crystal tide,
His golden tresses dripping there, to drink ;
Then on that flowery sod seemed in soft sleep to sink.

XI.

“ Another morn. The boy had grown a youth ;
A gentle, white-robed form there seemed to be,
Which, with a maiden’s lovingness and truth,
Through a fair valley bore him company.
Earth, ocean, air, were all serenity ; —
But then, methought, was heard a trumpet’s tone,
And that bright angel-figure seemed to flee,
Or melt upon the air with plaintive moan ;
And ’mid stern warrior-forms that youth was left alone.

XII.

“ Another morn. There rose a gloomy wood,
Amid whose shades the golden fruitage glowed ;
But o’er the red earth, fetlock-deep in blood,
Upon a coal-black steed, that gallant rode :
And then methought those iron footprints strode
Upon a milk-white fawn, whose bosom heaved, —
Her eyes a soul-transfusing gleam of pity showed,
As ’t were a maiden of her love bereaved,
Dying beneath that loss, yet gentle while she grieved.

XIII.

“ And a pale moonlight-face looked down from high,
While a strange, grisly shape behind did ride,
Who, though that phantom courser seemed to fly,
Gained on his flashing hoofs with every stride.
He neared, — he laughed, — ‘ At length thou ’rt mine,’ he cried, —
Clutched at the bridle, — raised a bloody knife, —
And Passion and Remorse rode side by side.
Then I awoke, amid a ghastly strife ; —
I was that shivering boy ! — that wilderness was life ! ”

XIV.

She listened, like a tearless Niobe ;
All her heart’s offspring, in their blooming pride,
Slain by each spoken stab of agony.
She stirred not, spoke not, trembled not, nor sighed ;
But her eye froze, its lids dilated wide,
And from the pupil, like an inky well,
Its azure curtainings were drawn aside ;
Her swanlike neck swam on her breast’s white swell,
And clasped upon her knees her clay-cold fingers fell.

XV.

But sorrow came not with the whirlwind's wrath,
Trampling in fury through earth's summer bowers ;
It was as if in June's enamelled path,
And her pavilions, gay with festal flowers, —
In the calm gladness of those noontide hours, —
Silent and chill, the frost-king should appear,
With wand of ice, from his cold, arctic towers,
And nature, flushing with the youthful year,
Should lie—a blackening corse—stretched on her frozen bier.

XVI.

Alas, the anguish of that mute distress,
With all its blank eternity of woe !
But the unsounded heart can never guess
What undeveloped strength may lie below ;
And often, with the martyr's steadfast glow,
Will the soul revel in the funeral pyre,
And, trampling down the scorching embers, go
To tread, like some pale saint, the harmless fire,
Listening, with charmed ear, to a celestial lyre.

XVII.

“Thou hast done well, Alphonso ! and thy grief
For thy sad sin shall win its recompense ;
Though watered all with tears, our path is brief
Through the allurements or the wounds of sense.
My cheated love had been a weak defence
Against the gnawing pain, the scorpion sting,
Which still attest the soul's omnipotence,
Even when ambition's fetters round it cling,
And luxury strives in vain to still its murmuring.

XVIII.

“Thou know’st I lost my mother when a child ;
Yet, through life’s hours of cheerless solitude,
I’ve thought an angel, pure and undefiled,
Looked on me with a vision which subdued
Distrust and grief, as her sweet presence would,
And beckoned me with tender, mournful eyes
To peace, where naught of sorrow should intrude ;
I’d thought thy love to be that paradise ; —
But no ! ’t was not of earth ; — she beckoned to the skies.

XIX.

“And there thou ’lt follow, dear one, — wilt thou not ? —
Beyond this earthly scene of doubt and fear,
To where our present griefs shall be forgot,
And memory die, or only make more dear,
With its soft moonlight, that glad atmosphere.
And there that gentle, milk-white fawn shall stand,
Dreading no more the hunter’s cruel spear ;
And through the precincts of that peaceful land
We ’ll wander on in joy, — a sexless seraph-band.

XX.

“Thy love for me has been a golden gleam,
That came my spirit’s solitude to bless ;
And still its sweet-remembered ray shall beam
Upon my path of darkling loneliness.
’T is joy I am not doomed to love thee less, —
’T is joy with thee to kiss the chastening rod, —
Heaven is half won, when men their sins confess ;
Have courage on the desert to be trod ; —
This bleeding heart I give to memory and God.”

XXI.

O, as a fountain's silver murmuring
To him who treads Arabia's sultry sands, —
As if some shadowing cloud should spread its wing
Where, with parched lip, that fainting traveller stands, —
As by a martyr 'mid his burning brands
There stood a visible angel, — on his soul
Fell the sad music of those soft commands ;
Or as the storm-tossed bird, where billows roll,
Would hear his mate's recall, and see his leafy goal.

XXII.

He knelt before her, bent his throbbing brow
Upon her velvet hand, looked up, and spoke : —
“ Never, Leona ! never, until now,
Knew I my nature ; at thy words, the yoke
Which bound the spirit's impulses is broke.
Calm as an infant on its mother's knee,
Within my breast a seraph soul hath woke,
Which with an emulous flight shall follow thee
On, to its native heaven of blest tranquillity.

XXIII.

“ Thy ever-present thought shall be my guide,
As erst in paths ambition's hues imbued,
So now in those thy steps have sanctified.
Nor shall my tears, in bitterness of mood,
Scorch the sad earth to barren solitude ;
But rather in the wilderness shall make
Greenness and gladness, where their drops are strewed.
I will go forth to action, and will break
The bread of love and pity for thy loving sake.”

XXIV.

One kiss ; — they parted, — he to turn again,
With widowed spirit, to the paths of life,
And feel the links of memory's viewless chain
Drag him to earth in the soul's fluttering strife.
And she ! that fond one, — that unwedded wife, —
To kindle on love's shrine devotion's fire,
Plunge to her heart the sacrificial knife,
Burn there that heart to ashes, and aspire,
With her unquenched affections, higher still and higher.

XXV.

A year passed on ; and where that palace stood
Glimmering amid the leafiness of June,
The voices of a sacred sisterhood
Waken to prayer with the fast-fading moon.
In the glad, laughing brilliancy of noon,
The granite convent-turrets coldly smile ; —
There, where mirth loved her harp-strings to attune,
The solemn organ shakes the cloistered pile,
And penitence and prayer people the marble aisle.

XXVI.

And there, collecting at the chapel chime,
Through the majestic woodland colonnades,
In all the gorgeous lendings of the time,
Come sweeping onward glittering cavalcades, —
Stern barons, gay gallants, and laughing maids.
Are they the spectral splendors of the past,
Haunting, in courtly garb, these cloister-shades,
Where the dim window's pictured light is cast,
And rustling in bright silks, like leaves in autumn's blast ?

XXVII.

They who once danced there in unthoughtful glee
Are come to swell a bridal's solemn pride ;
All that the kingdom hath of dignity
Is to those lands' inheritress allied.
She standeth there by Isabella's side ;
No meaner hand shall such a gift confer
On the betrothèd of so rich a bride, —
Him that should claim the charms and wealth of her
Who, dowered with crowns and gems, were naught the lovelier.

XXVIII.

A bridal ! but no bridegroom, — and each face
Wears a more pensive air, methinks, than those
Who come with smiling tearfulness to grace
The hour that ends the lover's happy woes,
When to his hearth some bashful maiden goes.
And she, — the bride, — how lovely, but how pale ! —
Kneeleth in fixed and motionless repose,
Like sculptured marble, at the altar-rail,
Her graceful, bending form hid in her snowy veil.

XXIX.

O, well befits this sad solemnity
The nuptials of that half-angelic maid !
'T is for no gallant, knightly bridegroom she
Kneels there in pallid loveliness arrayed.
For the last time the rose and myrtle shade
That brow to holy contemplation given ;
For the last time her tresses' glossy braid
Has with its twining gems in lustre striven ; —
That wreath, that veil, that gaze, announce the bride of Heaven.

XXX.

Now on the organ's billowy breathings float
The voices of the lattice-guarded choir ;
The unimpassioned treble's seraph-note
Shoots to the skies, with trail of liquid fire ;
And the contralto, fraught with deep desire,
Pours its tumultuous yearnings, full and strong,
Where the heart's throbblings pantingly aspire,
Till to heaven's courts the soul is borne along,
On the impulsive wings of melody and song.

XXXI.

She felt that influence. On her kindling cheek
The rose usurps its pale tranquillity ;
Her parted lips in unformed accents speak,
As if to whispering angels they 'd reply ;
All the blue glories of the sapphire sky
Are in her concentrated glance expressed.
Like the rapt seraphs, pictured there on high,
She stands, — her white hands folded on her breast,
Ready on faith's broad wing to seek her native rest.

XXXII.

And now before the abbess hath she bowed,
In half-transfigured, saintly loveliness ;
The nuns around their kneeling sister crowd,
Clothe her soft limbs in the harsh convent-dress,
Sever from her bright head each golden tress
Which showered its riches on her neck of snow,
And o'er that breast, whose earthly loneliness
No sympathizing human heart shall know,
The black, anticipated pall of death they throw.

XXXIII.

One lingering glance of earthly feeling fell
Where a pale form stood, from the crowd aside ;
And then the music's wailing dirges tell
That she to earth and earthly thoughts hath died.
Like silent spectres, from the chapel glide
The nuns ; the incense fades upon the air ;
Gone is that regal pomp and knightly pride ;
But through the lonely midnight-watches, there
That shrouded, manly form remaineth, bent in prayer.

CANTO NINTH.

THE ISLAND BRIDE.

CANTO NINTH.

I.

THY radiance, thou unsympathizing sun,
Whose beams of variously refracted light
Give various hues to all they look upon,
Is as is life, — identically bright,
Yet manifested to our differing sight
In thousand colorings, which, wan and meek,
Fall on the lily's petals coldly white,
Or in the rose-bud's bursting gladness speak,
Or mantle feverishly on autumn's hectic cheek.

II.

But roll along, uncaring and sublime,
On thy unswerving axle! Though the grace
Of childhood's thoughtlessness, and manhood's prime,
Be furrowed by thy footsteps' journeying trace,
And youth's warm rose-tint fadeth from the face, —
The spirit's vision is unquenched; and we
Can track thy chariot-wheels through time and space,
To where those rays of life and light shall be
Blended in one effulgent, white eternity.

III.

And now cool evening's mellow shades of brown
Fall upon Spain ; — that softened orb hath set,
Laying aside awhile his fiery crown,
Though its reflected glories linger yet.
Within the city's garden-place have met
The townsfolk of each differing degree,
Where the thick flowers with moonlight dew are wet,
To give those grateful hours to social glee,
While music's tones enhance night's soft serenity.

IV.

Beneath the trees there are young lovers keeping
Their vigils, lighted by dark, starry eyes ;
Beneath the guard-house porch are soldiers sleeping,
Careless how each unvarying moment flies ;
From the thronged walks a thousand voices rise,
Jests on each lip, mirth on each countenance,
O'ercanopied by those transparent skies ;
And youth's glad pulses with the music dance, —
When, lo ! a breathless pause arrests all utterance.

V.

Laughter is hushed, as if the rippling surge
Were froze to ice at some magician's tone ;
The wailing trumpets pour a funeral dirge ;
The crowd — like grain by one broad sickle mown —
Kneel ; and the soldiers, from their bench of stone,
Start up and form in martial homage there ;
On every face a sacred awe is shown ;
No noble now so haughty as may dare
Defy, — and none so poor but may that feeling share.

VI.

For, issuing from the gray cathedral's porch,
A long procession meets the people's sight,
Lit by the glare of taper and of torch,
Borne at its side by baron, chief, and knight.
To some sick spirit — ere in viewless flight
It soar to realms no fleshly foot hath trod —
Goeth the church's latest, holiest rite ;
His grace, who shed his blood on Calvary's sod,
The sacred, visible emblem of the present God.

VII.

Leave we the scene of quick-reviving mirth,
And follow on unto the darkened room,
Where, now unclasped from the embrace of earth,
The parting spirit passes to its doom.
There — his soul veiled by death's fast-gathering gloom —
Doth the long-absent hero reappear ;
Behold him on the threshold of the tomb,
White with the snows of many a thankless year, —
He who upon the world bestowed a hemisphere !

VIII.

It is no time for tears. We weep for those
Who strive to clasp the earth from which they sprung
Climbing not up, but downward, — who, her woes
Unheeding, walked life's sufferings among, —
Unto whose clay-stopped ears unheard were sung
The melodies of Faith, — in whose career
To heaven, earth's gifts, as obstacles, were flung, —
Who toiled, with bawble wreaths to deck their bier,
Or deemed war's laurel grew in heaven's pure atmosphere.

IX.

We may lament for friendship's broken chain,
The severed ties of love, the hopes of youth, —
And bitterer still for those who toil in vain,
Blind to the steadfast symmetry of Truth,
And kneel to idols crumblingly uncouth ;
But they who for our nature's hungry dearth
Have broke one loaf, have shed one smile of ruth, —
The wages of their toils are not of earth ;
Go they to their reward, — death is not death, but birth.

X.

And there he lay, — life's pulses ebbing fast,
But still his eye all-radiantly sublime ;
As one who with prophetic vision passed
Unblenching onward through the wrecks of Time.
A wanderer, bronzed by India's ardent clime,
Is sitting at his side ; methinks that grace,
Marred as with sorrow for some early crime,
Hath in my mind an unforgotten trace ; —
Yes, 'neath that monkish cowl it is Alphonso's face !

XI.

The solemn rite was past, — and he was left
Within that dim confessional alone,
To speak to one of earthly hope bereft,
Of spiritual cheer, in friendship's tone.
If sins were told, let them remain unknown ;
But ere that burning gaze was quenched in night,
And his pale lips breathed forth their latest moan,
Wild words, like these, painted the forms of light
Which peopled fever's dreams with visions strange and bright.

XII.

“ Methought upon a headland’s utmost verge,
In youth’s intensity of hope, I strayed ;
From the broad western ocean came the surge,
And round my path in murmuring music played ;
In his sea-cradled couch the storm was laid ;
The big, round sun was sinking to his rest ;
Of the tall, pillared clouds his brightness made
One vast pavilion in the gorgeous west,
Whence he looked down enthroned, in rainbow glories drest.

XIII.

“ Then, stretching forth imploring hands, I asked
For wings to flee to those delicious isles
Which, in imagination’s vision, basked
In the calm radiance of his midnight smiles ;
To tread, alone of men, the mountain-piles
Which there must balance India’s hills of snow ;
To track the crystal paths of their defiles,
Where, glittering white, the moon’s pale footsteps go,
And from their height survey the untrodden world below.

XIV.

“ Then overhead the viewless rush of wings,
With soft vibration, smote upon my ear,
And all around aerial murmurings
Filled with their music the bright atmosphere.
I turned, — a white-winged, youthful form stood near ;
Like the mysterious midnight firmament
Were his blue glances, — starlike, deep, and clear ;
With his white plumes his lustrous locks were blent,
And his red lip — like Time — was mutely eloquent.

XV.

“ His lips unclosed : — ‘ If thou art sure,’ he said,
‘ Thy heart in steadfast courage shall abide,
Follow my steps, with an unfaltering tread,
Through the deep barriers of yon ocean tide.’
Beneath his wand the wave, from side to side,
Swung back upon its portals, as a gate
Which on its hinges noiselessly doth glide ;
And to that cavern, chill and intricate,
With one last look at earth, I enter with my mate.

XVI.

“ Onward we pass, through endless emerald arches,
Interminable crystal colonnades,
Where the tall sea-trees, like the mountain-larches,
Droop their still branches in those silent glades,
Or with the current wave their glossy blades,
As if through woods unrustling winds should blow ;
And there the sea-grass hangs its floating braids,
Clustering on rocks whiter than winter snow,
Or with the drifting tide stands swaying to and fro.

XVII.

“ Deeper and deeper still, to where is left
The wealth of a drowned universe to sleep,
Where, through each grim and earthquake-rifted cleft,
Unnumbered slimy monsters coil and creep,
Beside tall cliffs, precipitously steep,
Across broad plains of ever-moistened grass,
And where the grisly people of the deep
Strive to break through that cavern’s walls of glass,
And, with great, greedy eyes, glare on us as we pass.

XVIII.

“And there, across the clear convexity
Of ocean, many a fathom overhead,
The white-winged ships, like planets in the sky,
Along their compass-guided orbits tread.
Though all is still below, fearful and dread
The tempest on those upper waters breaks ;
And, white and cold, the bodies of the dead
Come flickering down, like the thick winter-flakes,
Weltering in dreamless sleep no summer sunshine wakes.

XIX.

“And then we climbed a massy marble stair,
Emerging into sunshine, and the light
Fell on a gate magnificently fair,
Whose portals barred our footsteps and our sight ;
And a majestic figure, clad in white,
Stood there expectant. Then my guide, to me
Turning his azure orbs, serenely bright,
Took from his gathered robe a golden key,
Saying, — ‘This glory, mortal ! is vouchsafed to thee.’

XX.

“I took it ; — but a dusky female form
Clung to my mantle with despairing hands,
And with lips quivering, as beneath a storm,
Besought me not to break that portal’s bands.
On either side a ghostly phalanx stands,
Whose voices murmur like the wave-beat shore,
Ready, whene’er that portal-door expands,
Through it, like ocean’s rushing tide, to pour,
And spread their long array on the resounding shore.

XXI.

“ And on each side the gate, a pyramid
Spread its broad base upon the steadfast ground ;
With its tall apex in the heavens hid,
It threw a dark funereal shadow round.
From far beyond there came the rushing sound
Of giant cataracts, — and then, between
The lullings of each far-pulsating bound,
Came the calm voices of the rural scene,
As the glad tones of childhood there had been.

XXII.

“ And then I laid my hand upon the lock ;
And as it felt that talismanic key,
The mighty panels, with an earthquake shock,
Opened upon their hinges crashingly.
And that long train of spirits seemed to me
To enter in, a countless, rushing throng ;
And white-robed Freedom, all-exultingly,
With firm, imperial footing, passed along,
As unto her of right that mansion did belong.

XXIII.

“ Then, with a shriek of bitter agony,
That dusky, shuddering shape was onward borne ;
The pyramids beneath her thrilling cry
Shook, as an echo from their caves was torn ;
And she, dishevelled, trampled, and forlorn,
Threw back on me a look which seared my brain, —
Of pity half it seemed, and half of scorn, —
And, pointing to her fetters' bloody stain,
She cried, — ‘ Prepare thy neck ; it, too, shall know 'this chain !’

XXIV.

“ And I have known it. Lo ! the purple scar,
Which hath to my defrauded spirit taught
How ruthlessly ingratitude could mar
The hands which unto Spain new empires brought ;
Behold the recompense for which I fought
The elements, — the stern remembrancer
What guerdon benefits, once past, have bought ;
And he, who ages hence my dust shall stir,
Shall find these fetters mouldering in my sepulchre.

XXV.

“ And now farewell, my comrade ! thou hast been
With me in baffled youth’s still hopeful trust ;
Thou hast beheld my laurels thick and green,
And thou hast seen them crumble into dust ;
Thou hast experienced the change which must
O’ercloud ambition’s most successful dream ;
Thou know’st how brightest steel will yield to rust,
And how the mountain-summits coldly gleam,
Which from the vale of youth so silvery radiant seem.

XXVI.

“ Thou know’st that it is well. It is the earth
Which fades from us, — not we who fade from it ;
It matters not the record of our birth
Should be on its green page no longer writ ;
We ’re not identical ; — the soul is lit
At fires which shall outlive the sun ; and we,
How strong soe’er to earth our hearts were knit,
Would not its life should follow us, but be
To other souls a stepping-stone, — a legacy.

XXVII.

“ And what hath fame’s uncounted tongues to give ?
Though myriads praise, but a brief boon is won ;
But in God’s concentrated glories live
The fountains of the all-diffusive sun ;
His smile *is* fame, and as time’s torrents run
Eddying in fury round life’s dizzy steep,
Whose mists bewilder and whose thunders stun,
Faith, with her hand in his, her watch can keep
Upon the beetling verge, and there all-tranquil sleep.”

XXVIII.

And thus his spirit passed ; yet, with those chains
Suspended by his solitary bed,
Happier than when he trod youth’s verdant plains,
And saw Hope’s radiant halo overhead.
What though each fickle, earthly hope was dead,
And their ghosts haunted memory’s moonlight ray ?
With Faith’s deep, spiritual gaze he read
Heaven’s fiery chart, and trod its starry way,
As erst across the deep he tracked the westering day.

XXIX.

And with that word upon his lip, he died !
Happier, thrice happier, than the monarch’s throne,
With myriads kneeling to its despot pride,
Is the poor couch, untended and alone,
Where that brief word hath breathed its magic tone ;
The martyr’s stake, the patriot’s dungeon-gloom,
It makes irradiate, and sorrow’s moan
Bursts into rapture as its tints illumine
The undiscovered land beyond the portal-tomb.

XXX.

With two such souls to beckon, shalt thou not,
Alphonso, tread sustained the flinty road
Where one brief moment, ever unforgot,
Life's blossoming path with barren thistles sowed?
O, yes! from memory's bitter fountain flowed
Sweet waters of repentance; and Remorse —
A haggard dam — a blooming child bestowed.
Step after step he climbed his upward course,
Till on the peak he stood, — strengthened to sinewy force.

XXXI.

He quitted Spain once more; he turned his feet
Back to those desecrated ocean-isles;
And there the trampled Indian learned to greet
His pitying gaze with thankfulness and smiles;
With many a deed of mercy he beguiles
His solitude; till, in a mountain-cave,
He pointed out — hid in the wood's lone aisles —
His tomb; and when his form to earth they gave,
One was already there; — it was Mahala's grave!

MISCELLANEOUS.

SUMMER MUSINGS.

Lo, Summer's verdure ! Let me quit awhile
The city's teeming labyrinth, and seek
The sympathizing gaze of Nature, who,
Like a fond mother, smiled upon my youth,
And claims the love and reverence of my prime.
The spirit craves at times to leave the place
Where all life's attributes are ends or means
Of toiling commerce, and to fold her wings
Where Earth, unstinting, lavishes the gifts
Which reproductive human handicraft
But feebly emulates.

How tenderly
Contrasteth Nature's gentle kiss of peace
With the hot lip of Pleasure ! and the soul,
That, like a pilgrim, through the weary world
Beareth her pack of cares and vanities, —
How gladly lays she it aside awhile,
To snatch a respite from her weariness !

Amid the dazzling pageantry of joy,
Where glad eyes flash, and laughter welcomes wit,
And pulses beat in cadenced unison
To music's tones, and in the eddying dance
Fair shapes of mirrored gracefulness float by, —
There flattering crowds acknowledge Beauty's sway,
As queen of Mirth's bewildering carnival.
But when delight's inconstant phantoms fade,
The heart disclaims the transitory joys
Which charm the senses, to defraud the soul.
Then, in imagination's pensive hour,
Nature invites the maiden's lonely steps ;
Here Earth's glad spirits are her ministers,
And from her queenly throat lithe zephyrs lift
The clinging mantle of her showering locks,
And count each ringlet of their shining store.
With Fancy's train around, she makes her throne
The far-o'erlooking hill-top, at whose base
The various landscape, stretching hazily,
Smiles, — as a royal infant through his veil
Of silvery gauze ; — or under whispering elms
She lies unthoughtfully, where, dallying
With the west wind, love flickers round her cheek,
And her fresh virgin lips incarnadines.
The year's glad children greet their playmate-guest ;
Spring's girlish fingers twine around her brow
Soft coronals of heaven-eyed violets ;
Young spendthrift Summer, like a wooing prince,
Flings at her feet his rich inheritance ;
Or Autumn weaves, to deck her fragrant bower,

His gorgeous tapestries of glowing leaves, —
The parting seasons' festal draperies, —
Amid whose flakes the arrowy sunbeams glance,
As when, through blazoned minster-panes, they court
The cloistered charms of some chaste votaress.
No sickly perfumes dull the sated sense,
But sea and land breathe kindred healthfulness,
And all sweet buds their prayerlike incense blend
With aromatic breath of odorous pine ;
While, in creation's psalm of gratefulness,
Earth's tongues are still earth's joys' interpreters,
And speak in music most articulate.
Though harp and flute breathe forth no measured strain,
Ocean's deep organ-pipe, and shrill accord
Of bird and bee, rise up harmonious,
Bearing high aspirations, which no string
To human hand responsive can awake.

Who hath not felt how nature's loveliness
Mirrors, through every shade of fantasy,
The varying, viewless features of the soul ?
To childhood's guilelessness the singing brook,
The breeze, the sunshine, are as playfellows ;
And with the choral thunders of the storm,
When the red bolt darts hissing to the wave,
Passion's wild voices shout in harmony.
As from Egeria's fount, the Delphic hill,
Or old Dodona's vocal solitudes,
Ruler and prophet sought their oracles,
Earth still, in cave or solitary wood,

Inspires her votary. Her mountains are
Thought's giant pedestals, by which the soul
Climbs, Titanlike, to God. The horizon's verge
Provokes the spirit's wings to heavenward flight,
Where her rapt vision meets those angel-eyes
Which sympathize with man's vicissitudes,
And, like a cloud that prophesies the dawn,
Reflects their radiance on the world below.
Her gentle kiss unwrinkles toil's hard brow ;
And to thy shrine, saintlike Simplicity,
When the vexed spirit hungers for repose,
She welcomes us with a maternal smile ;
Not the young mother's, whom fond nature's pride
And joy reciprocal o'erpay each pang, —
But hers, to whom, love's dazzling veil stripped off,
Life stands revealed in bleak severity ;
Whose loving, sad intensity would say,
“ I've borne thee, precious one, with bitter throes,
To bitter heritage, wherein thy heart
Must travail also with acuter pangs
Than doth the body, till thy chastened soul
In seraph-birth claim seraph-sisterhood,
And every bloody drop of agony
Flashes, prismatic, in the smile of God.”
Nature, in every mood, is eloquent ;
And he whose soul toils, slumberless, to solve
The racked heart's torturing problem, “ What is life ? ”
May here find time, place, circumstances, fit
For hopeful, heavenly colloquies with Thought.

From such communion when the spirit turns
Back to the work-day duties of the world,
She hath each sacred chamber of the soul
Hung with the pictured memories of earth,
And bringeth stores of sweet imaginings
To vivify the barrenness of toil.
To her serener gaze the forms of truth
There once unveiled — as to the Idalian swain
Stood Wisdom, Power, and Love — are manifest,
Like shrouded outlines to the sculptor's eyes,
E'en through the lendings of deformity.
But 'mid such dear and manifold delights
Man may but lengthen out a summer-hour ;
He hath a mission to humanity,
Which summons where his fellows congregate,
And, 'mid the confluence of the crowded mart,
Enjoins a loving, thoughtful energy.
And why lament the inevitable lot,
Or take its varied blessings grudgingly ?
'T is action gives vitality to life.
Nor do the city's brick-bound thoroughfares
Rebuke the awakened spirit's questionings.
Beauty, who scorns the homely guise of toil,
May there reflect, " Within our human hearts,
Which is most human ? " Lone humility
May there, in chastened meekness, learn to tread
Faith's boundless, planet-paved inheritance ;
Science may strain within his pallid grasp
The sinewy fingers of the artisan,
And ask, " What were we, separate ? "

The rich, the wise, the good — Christ's almoners below —
Cast their account with that dread usurer
Who lends to us upon such fearful pledge, —
The soul's beatitude. With human tears
Jesus wept Lazarus ; — and human tears
Are still the priceless anodyne of woe.
On mercy's errand, through the mocking street,
That loving one his bloodstained burden bore ;
We in his holy service there may toil,
The friend of him who to himself is false ;
Or audible, amid the dense abodes
Of sinful, sordid wretchedness, — as erst
Through the lone aisles of the primeval wood, —
May hear reverberate from the shivering soul
Of the first fratricide that thrilling cry, —
“ O man ! where is thy brother ? ”

Such appeal

Summons the thoughtful. But how few can claim,
Where cares absorb, and mirth intoxicates,
To look with equal, unimpassioned eye
On men and things around ! What human soul
Shall stand, as gold, that dread alembic's test,
Were hard to guess. In its fierce alchemy,
Thought, Passion, Feeling, mix confusedly,
And generate or balm or poison.

'Mid learning's night, the stumbling graybeard groped
Within the elemental workshop of the world,
In baffled quest of nature's master-key.

But we, who boast the light of reason's ray,
And revelation's mild effulgency,
May track Reflection's footsteps to the dim,
Embowering shades, and find, perchance, with aid
Of whispering shapes which haunt their leafiness,
The philosophic talisman of Truth.

The trembling mariner, whose shattered bark
Swings beaconless within the yawning trough,
Shrinks from the nearing breakers' hungry roar ;
Imagination scarce anticipates
Death's gurgling, icy horrors, when he drifts
Within the lee of some storm-battling cape,
Where the unvexèd waters kiss the shore,
And, hid no more by intervening surge,
Like a fond sister's sympathetic eye,
The beacon smiles across their rippling breast.
And thus calm contemplation still reveals
The light, by human passion-surges hid.

Whoever, then, in the great pilgrimage
Would walk with equal and observant step, —
No laggard from his early comrade's side,
Nor yet swept blindly onward by the throng, —
Doth well, at intervals of toil, to seek
Some comprehensive summit, at whose base
The various chart of being is unrolled,
From whose high verge the jealous barriers
Of prejudice or custom are o'erlooked.
Thence let him trace the final unity

In which life's interwoven pathways terminate,
And choose the landmarks which shall guide his course
Amid that labyrinth's perplexity.

Happy the tired child who lays his head
Upon a parent's lap ; — she, all the while,
Encircles him with soft, maternal arms,
And, from lips redolent of happy prayer,
Rains kisses on his brow, and drooping lids,
And fragrant, silken hair. The boy, meanwhile,
Smiles in half-conscious sleep ; his upturned lips
Pout, kissingly, in answer to her own ;
His little hands still feebly print themselves
Upon her snowy bosom ; and his ear
Drinketh, in dreams, her whispered lullaby.
And thus upon the mighty mother's breast
May weary man an hour repose himself.

LINES

SUGGESTED AT THE WHITE MOUNTAINS.

WHAT painter is like Nature? Feebler hand
Had never dared design the mountain band,
That round me lift their pinnacles on high,
Outlined upon the canvass of the sky.
The half-awakened sunbeams are at play
Among their tops; — those couriers of the day,
Where the piled trees an emerald ladder make,
Leap down, to call to life the sleeping lake.
Pillowed on clouds, the tempest's wayward brood
Fold their wet wings and soothe their surly mood;
As if nor storm nor passion e'er might rage
Within such peaceful, holy hermitage.
Earth wakes! but 't is as when a lover lies
With night's sweet visions centred in his eyes.
No footfall stirs the solitude, — the stream
Singeth as though its music were a dream.
All is so tranquil, 't is as day were night,
In her own essence luminously bright,

Wooing us to her solitary side,
 Most sweetly serious, as a poet's bride,
 Who asketh not the aid of words to tell
 The thousand thronging thoughts that with her dwell.
 In such a season, — such an hour, — alone,
 Far from the city's dreary monotone, —
 The heart-engendered, heart-consuming strife, —
 The haircloth 'neath the robes of daily life, —
 Girt by these solemn mountain-tops, I stand
 Awestruck, — as in the hollow of God's hand.

Ye glorious landmarks ! motionless, sublime,
 Unchanged amid the changefulness of time !
 Titanic immortalities ! — but ye
 Do antedate antique mythology.
 Of the young world's first beauty ye partook ;
 From your hoar woods the ebbing deluge shook ;
 Unbarred your granite flood-gates, when the wave
 Back to defrauded earth her greenness gave ;
 Heard and responded, when, from Sinai hurled,
 God's accents circled round the throbbing world ;
 And when insensate Nature's shuddering cry
 Told the Redeemer's finished agony,
 Ye joined the heavenward voice from all below,
 That universal litany of woe.
 Ye kept your lonely sentry-watch, while gloom
 Wrapped art and science in their living tomb ;
 And when that veil of shadowy night was torn,
 Uttered your watchword to a world unborn.

Your cloudlike summits met the Northman's eye, —
 Half land-sick vision, half reality ; —
 On them, when bathed in sunset's parting rays,
 Dwelt the last sachem's sad, indignant gaze,
 Ere, lingeringly, along his western way
 He tracked the rushing pinions of the day.
 Your prophet-vision marked life's tide that flowed
 Where far Palmyra's thousand temples glowed,
 And, ebbing like a sun-dried torrent there,
 Left but a skeleton where nations were ;
 Then through the hundred gates of Thebes rolled on,
 O'er gorgeous Persia, to the Parthenon ;
 While but the Pyramids remain to trace
 The boundless glories of that nameless race,
 And Silence, like blind Sound, doth feel his way
 To dull Oblivion's arms of crumbling clay.
 Ye saw those gathered waters break in foam
 Around the Cæsars' lofty palace-dome,
 And leave the blood-stained tide-mark of their fall
 High on the Coliseum's empty wall,
 Where crownless Empire, unrevered and lone,
 Sat, garrulous of all her youth had known,
 While round the Alps that spreading current bore
 Rome's spoilers on, to crowd the Atlantic shore.
 And now that here its billowy voice is heard,
 Where but the Seasons' steps the stillness stirred,
 Ye stand majestic and undismayed,
 While at your base its haughty waves are stayed ;
 And when that all-o'ersweeping flood hath passed,
 Like Autumn's pauseless, melancholy blast,

Or like the eagle's swift, unswerving flight,
 On, towards the ever-westerling shores of night, —
 When the lone traveller sits where myriads trod,
 And the fox haunts the desert shrines of God,
 And desolation shall again resume
 A nation's cradle, dwelling-place, and tomb, —
 Ye from earth's change shall lift your steadfast eyes
 To heaven's unalterable mysteries,
 And then, as now, your thoughtful memories teach
 More than the countless harmonies of speech.

Did ye to the great brotherhood belong
 That prop the temple-roof of classic song,
 Its priests' gigantic spirits here might dwell
 Forgetful of fame's fadeless asphodel.
 Old Hesiod, in your cloudy tops might see
 A cradle worthy the Theogony,
 And sightless Homer, as your thunders roll,
 Had felt your mighty shadows on his soul,
 While giant phantoms through the solemn wood
 Whispered that here Jove's senate-chambers stood.
 The plaintive summer-wind amid the trees
 Had seemed the dreamy hum of Virgil's bees;
 Beneath your shades his shepherd-swains had sung,
 And in your caves the Cyclops' anvils rung.
 Ovid had peopled every echoing grove
 With peeping satyrs and fair shapes of love,
 And in each vine-bough trailing on the air
 Seen some transformèd Nymph's dishevelled hair.

Where the frail flowers your dread abysses fence,
Fearless, as childhood of omnipotence,
Rocked in their bells, had Shakspeare's fairies slept,
And o'er the grass in frolic mazes swept.
In your dim, silent shades had Milton sought
The sacred, sad soliloquies of thought,
And in his stately verse or Spenser's lays
Had been your deathless monument of praise.
Thou, fairest of the train, in every hour
Hadst lent the aid of inspiration's power ;
Either when morning's bridegroom sun hath kissed
To dewy tears thy veil of snowy mist ;
When the white, lustrous clouds, like wandering flocks,
Leave their torn fleeces on the rifted rocks,
And, as a blushing maiden, thou dost fling
Back the warm smile of day's awakening ;
Or when the secrets of thy pictured scroll
Thou to the noontide splendors dost unroll
Clearly, — as, by the calm, full-orbèd eye
Of genius lit, the heart's recesses lie, —
All-legible in sunshine, — from the peak
Where the close-clinging moss-flowers clothe the bleak
Gray cliffs, and teach in artlessness sublime
How near to heaven humility can climb ;
Far down to where, beside the silent glade,
Stand leafy caverns of profoundest shade,
The spirit's depths revealing, like the eye
That lights the brow of sun-burnt Italy.
Like some enchainèd queen thou sittest there, —
Latona's victim, — frozen in despair, —

Of the glad glories of thy days gone by
 Dreaming, to Autumn's wailing lullaby ;
 While the cloud-shadows, like ghost-children, throw
 Their arms about thee, as thou slumberest so.
 When twilight's purple haze hath deepened now,
 And darkly wraps thy heavenward-lifted brow,
 As a veiled priestess dost thou lead the choir,
 In the great dome of planetary fire,
 Who, since time's birth, to the unsleeping One
 Sing sleeplessly their midnight orison.
 In other climes thy loveliness had glowed
 Mirrored in thoughts its influence bestowed ;
 Lending its inspiration, each fair scene
 Were hung with votive wreaths of living green.
 But though no bard of olden time hath shed
 His genius, as a glory, round thy head ;
 None the less dear, each feature hath for me
 The tender ties of domesticity.
 My infancy was cradled in thy shade,
 Beneath thy woods my careless childhood strayed ;
 Here have I gathered Summer's earliest rose,
 And plunged, undaunted, in December's snows ;
 Drank Spring's young breath, and sighed when Autumn's leaf
 Taught my fond heart a sadly pleasing grief ;
 And now that manhood's steps from thee depart,
 I 'll bear thy image graven on my heart.
 Thou send'st me hence to life's great battle-field,
 " With or upon it," writ on Honor's shield ;
 If there I gain the athlete's fading crown,
 Here will I lay the puny tribute down, —

Unknown, still come with trustful heart to thee,
 Who know'st the nothingness of eulogy.
 Here through Spring's bowers some answering heart I'd lead,
 Their prophecies of summer bloom to read ;
 And when love's flowers their fragrant petals shed,
 With Autumn's dirges mourn their glories fled.
 When Memory in the darkened heart shall grope,
 And, shivering, clasp the clay-cold hand of Hope,
 I'll twine, 'mid Winter's snows, thy hemlock wreath,
 That drinks its greenness from the life beneath.
 Thy steadfastness shall lend its strength to me,
 Amid a fickle world's inconstancy ;
 As over ocean's waste my bark I steer,
 Thy rustling pines shall soothe my dreaming ear ;
 And must I leave beyond the dreary sea
 This garmenture of Earth's mortality,
 Hither my parted soul shall turn, to trace
 The footprints of its early dwelling-place,
 Ere, from earth's stains by faith and sorrow shriven,
 Childlike, it lift its claspèd hands to heaven.

S T A N Z A S.

LIKE an invading band of armèd men,
 Within some peaceful, pastoral retreat,
 The winds along the desolated glen
 Rush ruthlessly, with sacrilegious feet ;
 And Summer's dying smile of love is thrown
 On what usurping Winter claimeth for his own.

Stretching his hoary branches to the sky,
 The patriarchal oak, in mute despair,
 Mourns the sweet vine, that late so lovingly
 Clung in consorted, spousal beauty there ;
 Who now her pulseless tendrils hath unwound,
 And lieth, stiff and stark, upon the frozen ground.

The rose hath yielded up her scented breath, —
 The lily, like a virgin martyr, died ;
 And timorous flower-buds, smitten unto death,
 Lie in pale innocence, — while side by side
 The violated trees do sobbing stand ;
 And, like a funeral pall, gray mists enshroud the land.

Come from the convent-cloisters of the soul,
Ye white-stoled, nun-like thoughts, that watch and pray ;
Whose pallid hands Love's passing-bell do toll,
Hid from the full-eyed gaze of gorgeous day !
Chant ye your choral dirges, sad and fond,
And let the answering heart's analogies respond !

How like is life to life, — Nature to man !
How doth each changeful aspect of the year,
Since first the seasons' circling course began,
Image to him his journeying footsteps here, —
Through Summer's pleasant pathways hurrying fast,
To come to Winter's trackless, dreary snows, at last !

Was it for this that I to Nature's haunts,
Like Numa to Egeria's cavern, stole,
Trusting to her to feed the spirit's wants,
In the uncared-for winter of the soul ?
Lo ! Fancy's fruitless flowerets strew the road,
Where Faith and Reason stagger with their leaden load.

O perjured Hope ! thou through Spring's early bowers,
With the sweet sister senses' youthful band,
Didst lead me, all-engarlanded with flowers ;
Thy gentle breath my dreaming slumbers fanned ;
And when, as Adam to his angel bride,
I woke, thy cherub face was pillowed at my side.

Was it for this thou temptedst me to sail

Where passion's waves kiss golden-fruited trees,
And e'en the tempest falls in diamond hail,

Stirring the tide to silver symphonies, —

That now, on manhood's shore, lonely and dark,

Should lie the blackening wreck of pleasure's stranded bark ?

Vainly, alas ! Imagination thought

A fair, imperishable dome to build,

And uncreated shapes of beauty brought,

Till marble grace each marble chamber filled !

What boots it in the solitary breast

To have a palace-heart that knoweth not a guest ?

It were less hard to die, than thus, alone,

To hear life's wintry, wailing winds around ; —

But thankless, empty hands before God's throne

To raise, — his talent buried in the ground !

That thought doth write grief's mortgage on this clay,

All joys of bankrupt Earth were powerless to pay.

O, the mind prays for offspring, like the heart !

It hath a craving appetite for fame, —

That in another's breast its image start,

And bend in filial homage at its name ;

But thought that knows not action knows not seed ;

'T is kingly deeds alone beget a kingly breed.

Take, then, thy standard, though it be the cross, —
Take for thy motto, Holy, Human Love ;
And where in combat Truth's white plume doth toss,
Like loyal champion, to her rescue move
Through the dark ranks of Selfishness and Hate ;
Fight on, — and fearless fling the gauntlet down to Fate.

MATER DOLOROSA.

WATCHING, through midnight's mystic loneliness,
Beside the couch some cherished form doth press,
The smile whose waking light diffusive shone
Seems in concentrated sweetness all our own.
Thus by thy side, my daughter, as I stand
With Love and twin-born Sadness hand in hand, —
Those jealous misers who unlock their store
To count by night its hoarded treasures o'er, —
Their low, aerial voices speak to me
In tones of melancholy revery.
How tenderly entwined in slumber's arms
Thou liest, — with thy host of maiden charms
Circling thee round, like angel guards that keep
Their vigils o'er the helplessness of sleep ;
Thy showering ringlets settled into rest,
Like nestling cherubs, on thy gentle breast ;
Thy lips with music's dreaming numbers fraught,
The tranquil home of unimpassioned thought ;

Thy cheek, where feeling's changeful hues are seen,
Like telltale shadows on the moonlit green ;
And thy fair hands o'er thy white bosom laid,
The bashful heart's pure fantasies to shade !
O, as each feature's placid rapture shows
What fairy scenes hope's promises disclose,
How my fond spirit yearneth to presage
Thy fortunes in life's coming pilgrimage !
Ah ! could my coinèd heart's blood buy for me
One glimpse of thy unveiled futurity !
Alas ! that heart's prophetic sorrows tell
Thy tale of human suffering but too well,
And trace each flinty path thou wilt have trod
Ere thy torn spirit find its rest in God.

Thou pure white dove ! why didst thou come to me
But to announce the ebb of passion's sea, —
That earth's uncovered shores were bleak and drear ?
Thou 'st done thine errand ; — wherefore linger here ?
The fragrant buds on April's painted bough
Blossom and fade unwept for, — why not thou ?
Upon the torturing, arid wastes which lie
Between youth's hopes and age's apathy,
Where dewless moons reflect the sultry glare
Of shadeless suns that scorch the noontide air,
How shall thy gasping spirit vainly burn
Once more to these dear privacies to turn, —
Once more to lave thy feverish, throbbing brow
In the cool, gurgling streams around thee now !

How shalt thou mourn thy thoughtless infancy,
Thy bounding steps in girlhood's bowers of glee,
And all the fleeting glories which adorn
The primal hour of love's delicious morn !
Then the calm tide now circling through thy breast
Shall turn to maddening pulses of unrest ;
And every gentle floweret planted there
Be trodden by the ruthless foot of care.
Then shall sweet memories of household words
Moan like the wailing wind-harp's plaintive chords ;
The fibres of uprooted sympathies
Breathe the torn mandrake's desolating sighs,
While from each quivering, lacerated part
The bloody tears of recollection start.
Then shall affliction's teachings, harshly given,
Shake e'en thy spirit's confidence in Heaven,
And thy fierce wrestlings with despair and woe
Be for the world a gladiatorial show.
Why shouldst thou stay to count life's journeying suns
By added graves of life's belovèd ones ;
Or in the juggling alchemy of fate
Learn how sweet love can turn to bitter hate ?
Why make thy soul a sanctuary for one,
And seek the shrine to find the idol gone ;
Or twine affection's tendrils, but to bless
The poisonous upas-tree of selfishness ?
O, ere youth's angel-visitants depart,
And misery's vulture-talons rend thy heart, —
Before one human passion dare intrude
Within that heart's celestial solitude, —

Better thou choose a bridegroom who shall be
More faithful than an earthly spouse to thee ;
And, as thou layest down thy graceful head,
Spotless and meek, upon thy marriage-bed,
Girt with thy yet unloosened virgin zone,
Death's icy kisses freeze thee into stone !

A N A D I E U .

FAREWELL ! farewell ! The outward bound
 Wait but the loitering northern gale,
 Which, fettered on its natal ground,
 Lifts not, as yet, the loosened sail ;
 And, mirrored in a glassy sea,
 Our anchored ship swings silently.

The short-lived day fades fast and soon,
 And, smilelessly and desolate,
 Through leafless trees the abbess moon
 Peereth, as through a convent-grate ;
 While from its cloister-home afar
 Looks palely down each vestal star.

But though to-morrow, bounding free
 O'er waves of phosphorescent foam,
 Our white-winged wanderer of the sea
 Track Summer to her tropic home,
 What cares the heart to exile driven
 For a green earth, a cloudless heaven ?

Years are not life ; — for many days
Feeling, man knows not that he feels,
Until some sudden lightning-blaze
His darkly slumbering thoughts reveals ;
'T is in pangs dolphin-like and keen
The soul's bright, changeful hues are seen.

As in the lava-city's hoard
Each dumb and clouded portrait stands,
To transient brilliancy restored
When moistened by the pilgrim's hands ;
So, memories half-effaced for years
Shine bright, beneath each flood of tears.

And though such moments shed their light
But as the setting winter sun, —
One fleeting instant warm and bright,
Ere his pale, sickly course is run, —
Even the loneliest life can tell
The might of that brief word, — Farewell.

As if the roused and shivering heart
The resurrection-trumpet heard,
Its sepulchred affections start,
Within their icy cerements stirred ;
And joys and griefs, a mingled train,
Come smiling, sobbing, back again.

And yet the lover to its tone
Clings, like the bee to nectared sweets ;
And fancy, in his wanderings lone,
The murmured melody repeats ;
As if on landsick ear there fell
The silver sound of Sabbath-bell.

So, too, the hero — he whose pen,
Or sword, or voice, hath blessed mankind —
Heareth his welcome back again
In every prayer that loads the wind ;
And knightly thoughts, o'er land and sea,
Keep Truth's crusader company.

But, ah ! for me no thronging feet
Shall come, the laurel wreath to twine ;
Nor do I leave one heart to beat
In changeless unison with mine ;
But, like dead pleasure's hollow knell,
Ring out the words, — Farewell, — farewell.

And thou, O sea ! whose placid brow
Hides thy unfathomed soul's unrest ;
How like this traitor world art thou,
That decks with gems its heaving breast,
And smileth scornfully and cold
Above the wrecks its waters hold !

But, as a single drop of brine
Lost in that earth-encircling main,
Compares this throbbing heart of mine
With the world's sum of joy and pain ;
O fool, to think thy lot should be
Counted in life's immensity !

Yet science tells, each drop of foam,
From the storm-fretted breakers hurled,
Forms for as varied life the home,
As peoples this terraqueous world, —
That love and anger, hope and fear,
Dwell in its tiny crystal sphere.

Thus, in each being's mysteries
More gorgeous treasures lie concealed,
Than to the Eastern stripling's eyes
The lamp's enchanted slave revealed, —
More glorious empires to be won,
Than Alexander trampled on.

Let, then, thy intellect disown
These fetters of external sense,
And over all, save God alone,
Claim its god-gift, — omnipotence ;
Let coward natures cringe to fate,
Be thou, self-trusting, greatly great.

And lo ! the winds from slumber break, —
 To sunnier climes we take our way ;
Already in our sparkling wake
 The liquid, sea-born lightnings play ;
As troops of stars from upper air
Had left their homes to revel there.

And the blithe waves come forth to meet
 The fawnlike footsteps of our bark,
As maidens, with white, blue-veined feet,
 Danced around Judah's ransomed ark ;
And over ocean's crystal lawn
Glimmer the primal tints of dawn.

Take, then, the influence of the time ;
 Crave not man's fickle sympathy ;
But let thy answering spirits chime
 With the glad voices of the sea ;
One thought to grief, — one look behind ;
Now on ! uncaring as the wind.

AN ELEGY

ON A KING CHARLES'S, — DROWNED AT THE SEA-SHORE.

O, MANY a tear must mortals shed
O'er unenduring gifts !
Below, around, and overhead,
Life's painted pageant shifts.

Since memory's birth, no year but took
Something the heart held dear ;
Each page of life on which we look
Is blotted with a tear.

Some mourn for greater, some for less, —
'T is man's own estimate
That makes all things which harm or bless
Seem valueless or great.

Friendship laments each vanished joy,
The king his diadem ;
And is a child's grief for his toy
Less keen than theirs to them ?

Then, moralist, no proud surprise,
Nor scornfully deride,
That some few drops should fill the eyes
When ev'n a dog hath died : —

A dog, when judged of by the rule
Which men of science lend ;
But in the heart's less rigid school,
A playfellow, — a friend.

What most we value in our kind,
And celebrate in rhyme, —
Love, gratitude, — were all defined
In his glad pantomime.

Beauty, which oft the Fates confer,
Frail woman's fatal dower,
Was his, unheeded, as he were
An animated flower.

No velvet softer to the touch
Than was his silken hair ;
And like two sparkling diamonds, such
His fringèd eyeballs were.

No restless humming-bird, whose bill
Spring's honey-dew doth sip,
Glancing from bud to blossom still,
Was half so blithe as Trip.

Beyond his species he was kind,
Affectionate, sincere ;
In him how many a grace combined
Which makes an inmate dear !

What man shall dare unknit the chain
To bind all creatures given,
And tell, by weight, how large a brain
Has any hope of heaven ?

Perchance the Indian was not wrong
In his philosophy,
And to thy nature doth belong
Some being yet to be.

Who was it said that in God's eye
The sparrow was a care ?
Thus thy brief parting agony
Might in his pity share.

Farewell, then, playful little pet !
Each grief hath its degree,
And, 'mid life's joys and sorrows, yet
We 'll sometimes think of thee.

And there 's a moral in thy fate,
Imperative and clear, —
What lot to-morrow may await
Objects to-day most dear !

Thus shall thy life a lesson prove,
Thy death a homily,
And this poor fantasy of love
A parable shall be.

S T A N Z A S

WRITTEN AFTER THE DEPARTURE OF AN ATLANTIC STEAMER.

WITH what unconsciously majestic grace,
 Like a leviathan half roused from sleep,
 Thou movest from thy land-locked trysting-place,
 To cleave thy way across the convex deep;
 While Ocean shouts to thee his welcome wild,
 And clasps thee in fierce joy, — his fearless child !

Thy mighty pulses play, — thy soul of fire
 Paints its black breathings on the cold, blue sky,
 And, scoffing at the billows' puny ire, —
 As paws the war-horse at the trumpet's cry, —
 Thou pantest for a struggle with their wrath,
 Trampling thy onward course along their path.

Confided wealth to thee were nothingness, —
 Bucephalus weighed not his rider's gold, —
 But couldst thou of thy nobler freightage guess,
 The bruised and loving soul thine arms enfold,
 A mother's yearning tenderness thou 'dst feel,
 Thou iron-hearted thing with ribs of steel !

That sorrowing soul ! How many a fitful phase
Of life hath read its teachings to her eye,
Since, cradled in the shade of Shakspeare's bays,
She heard the Muses' whispered lullaby
Who with the sister Graces did combine,
Their flowers in Fate's dark web to intertwine !

How many a heart hath hung upon her words !
Wit, Art, and Wisdom at her shrine have knelt,
And on the trembling soul's awakened chords
The varying melodies of passion felt ;
For, in Love's school by Truth and Beauty taught,
That voice embodied all the charms of thought.

All lovely fancies of the poet's brain,
Which from Imagination's rifled hoards he stole,
Sprang from the page, informed with life again,
To claim their empire o'er the loyal soul ;
And Genius led that visionary band
To take fresh chaplets from his darling's hand.

There stood sad Constance, — for her murdered boy
Invoking vengeance, with white, outstretched arms ;
And sprightly Beatrice, so proudly coy,
Yet melted at the mischief of her charms ;
With Henry's wronged, repudiated mate,
Most queenlike still in her despised estate.

Gentle Ophelia came with willow crown,
Her dark, dishevelled tresses dripping wet ;
And wilful Kate, who wins us with a frown,
Whose temper shall be tamed to sweetness yet.
There was Cordelia's filial love, and then
The tender truthfulness of Imogen.

Lo ! through Verona's perfumed orchard-shades,
A girlish vision forms upon the sight,
Which, in those dim, ancestral colonnades,
With starlike beauty makes the darkness bright,
And kneels to her by Fate foredoomed to know
All depths of guiltless tenderness and woe.

Time gives and takes, — wayward alike in all ;
He bears two goblets in his trembling hands,
And where from one bright drops of nectar fall,
Verdure and blossoms clothe life's barren sands ;
And the old graybeard looketh back to smile,
As if amid those bowers he 'd pause awhile.

And moments come, when quivering lips must drain
That other goblet's bitter contents dry,
One draught, for years of concentrated pain, —
While his broad pinions stain the azure sky,
And their black shadows on the dewless sod
Hide from our haggard eyes the face of God.

It is that hour for her ; — upon the bleak,
Cold deck she stands, a monument of woe,
While on her speaking brow and bloodless cheek
Thought's struggling forms their giant outlines throw ;
As when, depicted on a marble wall,
Some hidden wrestlers' writhing shadows fall.

Soothe thou thy savageness, thou surly sea !
And, as upon a mother's throbbing breast,
With lion-hearted magnanimity,
Rock her to slumber, — she hath need of rest.
Chain the fierce tempest many a fathom deep,
Down at earth's core, where his pale victims sleep.

That vision fades upon the straining view ;
Bear her on gently, O thou gallant bark !
And may the dolphins' rainbow-tints imbue,
Like emblemed Hope, the billows cold and dark ;
Till, to thy port by inward impulse driven,
Thy rest shall symbolize the soul's in heaven.

SUNDAY ON MOUNT HOLYOKE.

I 'VE climbed, with slippery, toiling feet,
The cliff, beneath whose verge,
Far down, wide-waving woodlands beat
Their greenly rippling surge.

With rustling skirts the zephyr treads
The undulating trees,
And azure harebells nod their heads,
Rung by the passing breeze.

'Mid fields of variegated grain
The river lies asleep,
While the stern mountains to the plain
With softened outline sweep.

And, hand in hand, around the vale,
Clad in blue autumn-mist,
They stand, that naught the spot assail
The loving sun hath kissed.

On the green hill-side lowing kine
Are heard, and bleating flocks,
And, where the farm-yard roofings shine,
The shrilly crowing cocks.

But naught of sight or sound doth mar
The holy Sabbath-time,
Where the white belfry gleams afar
Whispers the village-chime.

Like a fond mother's kiss, the scene
Soothes the unrestful brain ;
Earth's love, so smilingly serene,
Wins the sick soul from pain.

Here are no traces to record
Man's crimes or his distress ;
The brooding spirit looks abroad
In happy loneliness.

How spiritual seems the place !
The blue, unclouded skies
Look down, as when a thoughtful face
To yearning dreams replies.

'T is well to kneel in pillared aisle,
And swell prayer's choral tone ;
But holiest feelings crave awhile
To find themselves alone.

And as the landscape, viewed from hence,
Dwindles in sight and sound,
While heaven, in still magnificence,
Spreads broader arms around ;

So, from this lofty mountain-goal
To which my feet have trod,
Life's objects lessen, — and the soul
Seemeth more near to God.

A S O N G .

I.

WHEN gaudy Day doth fold his drooping wing
In Twilight's bowers,
And Evening's dewy breath is murmuring
Amid the flowers,
I ask for thee, whose presence did enhance
That hour of rest ;
Thee, — listening to whose magic utterance,
The soul was blest.

II.

And when the thronging planets through the sky
In beauty tread,
And on the ocean, mirrored tremblingly,
Their light is shed,
I ask for thee, whose eye, so chastely meek,
Like stars was true ;
Thee, — whose cool kisses on my fevered cheek
Fell as the dew.

III.

And when Night's clustering constellations fade
 With Morning's birth,
And she, in rainbow-colored robes arrayed,
 Awakens earth,
I ask for thee, whose smile of loving light
 Warmed this cold clay ;
Thee, — 'neath whose joyous glance the spirit's night
 Melted away.

IV.

And where in splendor's glittering festival
 The mirthful meet,
While to glad music's cadenced measures fall
 Their twinkling feet,
I ask for thee, whose form of swanlike grace
 Was lightest there ;
Thee, — without whom life's sunniest garden-place
 Were cold and bare.

V.

I ask for thee in vain. Joyless I hail
 Day's dazzling car ;
Scentless and dim are Evening's odorous gale
 And Twilight's star ;
The heart hath lost its pulses, — youth its fire ;
 Sunlight seems gloom ;
And recollection haunts with tuneless lyre
 Affection's tomb.

S O N N E T.

As one who tracks the heavy-laden wain
Which beareth home its nodding, ripened sheaves,
To glean what chance-strown ears the reaper leaves
Of his rich store of gathered golden grain,
So I, upon Thought's harvested domain,
Where her bright web Imagination weaves,
Sitting beneath the sunny cottage-eaves,
Have gleaned these scattered fancies of the brain,
With the fond hope that their fast-fading flowers
Might in chill Winter's quickly-coming night
Bring to my soul the thoughts of Summer hours
And Autumn's colorings, so gorgeous-bright,
And that by some dear hearts, perchance, there be
Found there for coming Spring some seeds of memory.

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